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TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE

A SCHOLARLY AND CRITICAL JOURNAL

Feb 1997

Eliot's Aesthetics of Empire

Depression and Ted Hughes's *Crow*

A. R. Ammons's Search for a Supreme Fiction

Some Interviews with E. M. Forster

The Maturing of F. Scott Fitzgerald

Jean Brodie Reconsidered

History, Biography, and Narrative in *Libra*

UME 43 SPRING 1997 NUMBER 1

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Reading the Wreckage: De-Encrypting Eliot's Aesthetics of Empire

PAUL DOUGLASS

> Many of the works of the Ancients have become fragments; many works of the Moderns are so in their inception.
>
> —Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum,* Fragment 24

> Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
> The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
> Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
> Isolated with no before and after,
> But a lifetime burning in every moment
> And not the lifetime of one man only
> But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.
>
> —T. S. Eliot, "East Coker"[1]

It has seemed natural to find a wide gulf separating the poet of *The Waste Land* from that defender of aristocracy who later described his views as "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion."[2] As many studies have shown, however, Eliot's writings exhibit a substantial continuity of conservative and reactionary beliefs from about 1914.[3] The aesthetics of the jagged and the juxtaposed that Pound and Eliot had adapted from T. E. Hulme also form part of this continuity.[4] Though its formal innovations appear "revolutionary," *The Waste Land*'s aesthetics are of a piece with modernism's reactionary character and reflect the cultural politics of the British conservatism Eliot had adopted. The de-encrypting, digging up, and decoding of the poem's fragments and allusions—its dry rock and intertextual archae-

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ology—also lead to familiar ground: Eliot's gravitation to the British empire as "home." Finally, *The Waste Land* may be seen as part of a British literary tradition of "reading the wreckage" that goes back at least to Edward Volney's *Ruins* (1791).

Eliot's and Pound's use of fragmentation is qualitatively different from that of Joyce, Woolf, and H.D. I do not argue that fragmentation is an *inherently* reactionary aesthetic technique. Indeed it was associated with a liberal politics for Volney and Shelley. However, Eliot's and Pound's techniques of interruption and layering take on an opposite political coloration when their primary effect is to block access by the uninitiated, and when the initiation process must actually *precede* the aesthetic experience of a "modern" consciousness of complexity and contradictoriness. To put it another way, the aesthetic goal of Eliot's and Pound's major works becomes didactic, whereas the goal of Joyce, Woolf, and H.D. appears to be more truly "experimental," in the sense that they try—successfully, in my estimation—to evoke and explore a modern human consciousness through an aesthetics of disruption. Some political ideology inheres in all aesthetic practice, and "modernism" contradicts itself here, as in many of its other aspects. But since Eliot's 1922 poem has been so often taken to typify modernist aesthetics, it is important that we notice the consistency between his politics and his chosen form, even if that form has other possible implications.

There is little doubt that Eliot's identification with right-wing Anglo-European culture matured long before *The Waste Land* was published. He had been attracted to reactionary politics when he encountered Charles Maurras's work in the aftermath of his temporary "conversion" to Bergsonism. Maurras had amplified French fears of racial degeneration through the Action Française, and his political agenda was later implemented by the Vichy government, leading to his eventual imprisonment for life as a traitor. As Peter Ackroyd points out, the *Nouvelle Revue Française* of March 1913, a publication Eliot would likely have read, described Maurras as "classique, catholique, monarchique," the trio Eliot would employ in his Oxford syllabus of winter 1916 and then later to describe himself (Ackroyd 41; cf. Schuchard). I agree with Kenneth Asher that "[T]he Maurrasien inheritance provided Eliot with a dominant intellectual framework that he retained throughout his life" and that Eliot's essay on Machiavelli in *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928) was actually a covert defense of Maurras (Asher 8, 54). Like Maurras, Eliot was drawn to the idea of a blooded aristocracy rather than an aristocracy of ability or wealth. Unlike Maurras, he came

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to understand that, in order to promote his cultural politics, he must veil his deepest beliefs and even present himself as consciously nonpolitical (see Asher 84 ff., 133).

Eliot was clearly thinking about how to gain acceptance in the British aristocracy from at least the time of his marriage in June 1915. In March of that year, he writes his cousin, Eleanor Hinkley, "Do tell Aunt Susie that the Miss Rhyss' are the most charming persons I have met in Oxford—certainly the most *aristocratic*," and in a chatty tone he goes on to lament that "a cultivated aristocracy is sadly to seek even in England, but God knows it is far better here than in our Slater-ised society." Samuel Slater was the (English-born) founder of the American cotton manufacturing industry. The desire to escape identification with such mercantile Americans and be accepted in an aristocratic realm—even a debased one—seems to motivate Eliot's differentiation, in this same letter, of various Oxford and Cambridge acquaintances. He says he has met two Irishmen, who "rather raised my opinion of the race," and several Indians, whom he prefers to the English, though he reports that "Bertie" (Bertrand Russell) "says [Indians] give him the creeps." He ranks himself above the overserious Cambridge and Oxford students, the best of whom he compares to "the clever Jew undergraduate mind at Harvard; wide but disorderly reading, intense but confused thinking, and utter absence of background and balance and proportion. I should expect it to be accompanied by a philistine aristocracy" (*Letters* 91–92).

A further insight into Eliot's desire for acceptance in elite circles may be gleaned from a letter to his mother in 1920. Eliot described meeting American writer Maxwell Bodenheim:

> I told him of my history here, and left him to consider whether an American Jew, of only a common school education and no university degree, with no money, no connections, and no social polish or experience, could make a living in London. Of course I did not say all this; but I made him see that getting recognized in English letters is like breaking open a safe. (*Letters* 392)

One may well imagine the feelings Eliot aroused in Bodenheim with this counsel. Eliot's own sense of isolation probably dates from before 1915. He had relatively few friends at Harvard, where he had adopted, after 1908, a more and more Laforguian aloofness (Ackroyd 33–35). Once in England, Eliot may have tried too hard to impress. When he visited the Morrells in the summer of 1916, he made his hosts ill at ease and put them off with "ostentatious learning," according to Lyndall Gordon (83). Aldous Huxley described Eliot in 1916 as "just a

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Europeanized American, overwhelmingly cultured, talking about French literature in the most uninspired fashion imaginable" (qtd. in Gordon 83).

Eliot's awareness that he was himself a "safe-cracker" clarifies his reaction to Bodenheim in 1920. As David Spurr observes, the desire not to appear philistine may help explain the anti-Semitism in poems like "Burbank With a Baedeker: Bleistein With a Cigar" (Spurr 272):

> A lustreless protrusive eye
> Stares from the protozoic slime
> At a perspective of Canaletto.
> The smoky candle end of time
>
> Declines. On the Rialto once.
> The rats are underneath the piles.
> The jew is underneath the lot. . . . (*CPP* 24)

The interruptive "On the Rialto once" forecasts the jerky compositional strategies of *The Waste Land*, which also mixes anti-Semitic attitudes with historical pessimism. As many have observed, Eliot shared such prejudices with Pound, whose condemnation of "usura" ("Canto 45") formed part of a Jew-paranoia that grew. Pound spuriously attributed that bigotry to Franklin:

> Remarked Ben: better keep out the jews
> or yr/ grand children will curse you. ("Canto 52")

A similar note is struck in Eliot's slightly milder remark in *After Strange Gods* (1934) that in any ideal community "reasons of religion and race combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable" (20). Ironically, Pound would later (in 1942) describe *After Strange Gods* as a work that had not "come through uncontaminated by the Jewish poison" (*Visiting Card* 22). In a letter to J. V. Healy in 1940, Eliot sought to rationalize his singling out Jews: "It should be obvious that I think a large number of free-thinkers of any race to be undesirable, and the free-thinking Jews are only a special case" (qtd. in Ricks 44). In the same letter, Eliot compares liberal Judaism to "a mild and colourless form of Unitarianism." It may be that Eliot's anti-Semitism is mixed with antipathy to his father's religion (see Ricks 44, 47, 28n). Anthony Julius convincingly argues that anti-Semitism is integral to Eliot's poetry, a fact that should properly leave us both "appalled and impressed," and that anti-Semitism formed part of Eliot's identification with Europe (40, 16).

In 1920, at any rate, he had no intention of acting as a sponsor of an American Jew. Nor would he settle for being perceived as merely a

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"Europeanized American." He had already mulled Henry James's fate in a 1918 obituary, saying, "It is the final perfection, the consummation of an American to become, not an Englishman, but a European—something which no born European, no person of any nationality, can become" ("In Memory" 1–2). Like most of Eliot's seeming compliments, this one bites back. To become "European" is to have no nationality—to become *no one*. Eliot spoke of the European tradition as Matthew Arnold defined it: as a great intellectual and spiritual "confederation" whose members shared "a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another."[5] Arnold urged England to seize the leadership in this confederacy, and Eliot seems to share his implicit belief that all universal perspectives are rooted in local turf. As Terry Eagleton has said, Eliot intended to "re-enact the Jamesian experiment," merging with "established English culture"—but Eliot would not wait, as James had done, to embrace conservative British life publicly (Eagleton 16–17). In January 1924, he described himself as "an old-fashioned Tory," saying, "I am all for empires" (*"Letter to the Editor" 95*); and by April of that year he had applauded T. E. Hulme as "classical, reactionary, and revolutionary"—and antidemocratic (*Criterion* 2: 231). He would shortly call Hulme "the most fertile mind of my generation" (*Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 82).

Hulme's remembered brilliance seems to have underscored the British postwar malaise for Eliot, during the period he was writing *The Waste Land*. George Gordon, who worked to establish English as an academic discipline in England and helped write the Newbolt Report of 1921, described how a "gloom" had settled on the fraternity of scholars and artists:

> . . . they felt they didn't matter, and some of them could hardly bear it. The good ones got over it more or less; the conceited ones sulked; but some have never recovered from the awful suspicion of that time that literature was futile. (qtd. in Baldick 104)

The loss of Hulme haunts *The Waste Land*, and this sense of loss clearly came through to critics, who immediately characterized the poem as an encapsulation of postwar angst. In the *New York Tribune* of November 5, 1922, Burton Rascoe admitted confusion, yet still found the poem "readily understandable" as an expression of "the universal despair or resignation arising from the spiritual and economic consequences of the war" (Gunter 3). Gorham Munson said simply: "It is easy to see that in part 'The Waste Land' is a poetic equivalent to *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*" (July 1924; rept. in Grant 203–12).

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This familiar history of *The Waste Land*'s reception may also be read as part of a prolonged, self-dramatized British *Götterdämmerung* that had begun in the eighteenth century. By the traditions of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, culture and empire were believed to move like the sun, from east to west. The notion that Europe was in decline, rendered by Berkeley in 1726, was already circulated widely by the 1750s:

> There shall be sung another golden age,
> The rise of empire and of arts. . . .
>
> Not such as Europe breeds in her decay;
> Such as she bred when fresh and young,
> When heavenly flame did animate her clay,
> By future poets shall be sung.
>
> Westward the course of empire takes its sway. . . .
> (Berkeley 4: 264–65)

These sentiments would receive a liberal romantic twist from Edward Volney as the eighteenth century closed, and thereafter the theme's popularity would grow. Much late nineteenth-century British writing dwells on the gloom epitomized in 1 Corinthians 10.11: "we are those upon whom the ends of the world are come." George Bernard Shaw wrote that Britain was "in an advanced state of rottenness" (Lester 3, 5), and James Froude remarked that Horace described in Rome "what we are now witnessing in England—fields deserted, the people crowding into the cities. He noted the growing degeneracy. He foretold the inevitable consequences" (Froude 8). The crowds in King William Street in *The Waste Land* symbolize degeneration as well as enervation (cf. Pick) and are inseparable from a xenophobic and anti-Semitic attitude that was widely distributed in the English-speaking world. Joyce's Stephen Dedalus reacts against this paranoia in the character of Mr. Deasy, who says, "As sure as we are standing here the jew merchants are already at their work of destruction. Old England is dying. . . . Dying, he said again, if not dead by now." Stephen responds that such views of history are "a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce 28). On the other side of the Atlantic, these images resonated with a readership worried about the "American empire." That theme is satirized in Fitzgerald's portrayal of *The Great Gatsby*'s Tom Buchanan, who has imbibed racialized Spenglerian paranoia: "Civilization's going to pieces. . . . Have you read *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by this man Goddard?" (13). It is also, sadly, a theme Fitzgerald reinforced in the "flat-nosed Jew" Wolfsheim, who regards Nick with tiny eyes

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and "two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril" (69–70).

The Waste Land's version of this reactionary response derived its power from traditional literary forms: blank verse, *terza rima*, and Chaucerian and heroic couplets. By juxtaposing these honored forms in a jagged, nonnarrative structure studded with artifacts from the Indo-European literary tradition, Eliot had found the elements of a modern aesthetic of wreckage, one that Pound had already groped for when he published in the third canto of his drafts of 1917 a translation of a translation of a fragment of the *Odyssey*. After *The Waste Land*, this passage became the whole of "Canto I"; later cantos followed out the path. Modern literature would emulate archaeology: the antique showing through the contemporary, the papyrus and the klaxton. It would replay the lessons of the ruins: "Palace in smoky light, / Troy but a heap of smouldering boundary stones" ("Canto IV"). And as the fumbling responses of early reviewers show, in Eliot's and Pound's hands such images demanded "de-encrypting."

The hieroglyphic character of *The Waste Land* was the key to its success, as Conrad Aiken saw in the very beginning: "The poem succeeds—as it brilliantly does—by virtue of its incoherence, not of its plan" (161). *The Waste Land* not only invites us to decode, it also is unreadable without a key. Frank Lentricchia argues that this event in modern aesthetics is actually an endlessly decipherable one, because "however we construct it, [the poem] . . . suits our sense of ourselves." And yet, he continues, "Eliot after *The Waste Land* will continue to be another matter: an event unabsorbed because, in the context of Western values, it is unabsorbable" (286). But this traditional division of early and late Eliot misleads. *The Waste Land*'s cryptic style is not infinitely decipherable, unless we wish to ignore its impact on the fashions of poetry and the habits of reading that ensued. Nor should we divorce the poem from the growing professionalization of English studies and the British political backlash of the 20s. The elegiac attitude toward high culture evoked by the poem's images is ritualized in its technique. And together, these images and technique reinforce reactionary views.

The Waste Land's technique is famously fragmentary and syncretic. It claims to mimic the anthropology of Frazer and Weston that Eliot cites in the poem's notes. Just here, we find an important parallel between modernist writing and the modern museums that collected artifacts of primitive and "high" culture. *The Waste Land* offered a "modern" perspective on that material, one that had been conditioned by Durkheim, Bergson, and Levy-Bruhl. The poem's exploded structure

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suggests relations among units of myth plucked from their contexts—what Levi-Strauss has called "mythemes"—and those relations reveal a metastory.[6] To create its effect, the poem employs quotations, vignettes, translations, and paraphrase as effective equivalents for physical artifacts. *The Waste Land* thus rehearses a scholarly obsession with ritual and with the "pre-logical" faculties of primitive cultures; it also parallels the museum in placing its "artifacts" in contexts that diagram their relation to a superior, if disintegrating, European culture.

The Waste Land's mixing of vegetation ceremonies and Christian legends shows cultural bias. For example, as Harish Trivedi has pointed out, Eliot introduced the vocabulary of the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and *Geeta* from a Christian angle, substantially altering and misrepresenting his sources (45, 62). This warping of the content also involves *technique*. Just as Frazer employed comparative juxtapositions in *The Golden Bough*, *The Waste Land* juxtaposes myths of Osirus with Indo-European myths and history to express and rationalize Western anxiety. The poem valorizes the prelogical mentality as the origin of art and the potential salvation of a culture in danger of drying up. As David Spurr says, it offers the postimperialist poet an opportunity to envision Europe as somehow "united with its colonialized other in an idealized mythic identity" (272). I simply assert that *The Waste Land*'s cultural biases are a matter of form as well as content, for the archaeological method being mimicked—of reading the fragments—constitutes an approach to history and culture that is emphatically not value-free. Archaeologists and collectors imported fragments of other cultures to set up in museums and drawing rooms; the poem also "exhibits" objects that, like the Elgin Marbles, were torn from context, bringing antiquity—e.g., the Punic Wars—into dialogue with the war generation's despair: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (*CPP* 39).

Such juxtapositions reinforce a reactionary perspective on history that involves other stereotypes; for example, those of the Middle East, found in countless images in magazines and books—swarthy men and women in open desert, kaffiyehs on their heads; women keening in mourning:

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only (*CPP* 48)

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These Middle Eastern touches, along with the passage from *Antony and Cleopatra* ("The barge she sat in, like a burning throne") harmonized with an Egyptian fad created by the Tut discovery of 1922, to which I shall turn momentarily. "Art deco" was soon born in a 1925 Paris exposition heavily dominated by the "Isis Collection" of Leon Bakst, and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) was published with an art deco dust-jacket that Fitzgerald particularly liked. The popularity of Egyptiana may have been one minor factor in *The Waste Land*'s mystique.

But the strongest appeal of the poem lies in the familiar tune of imperial decline it plays, a melody that Lord Byron had acknowledged was already "trite" in 1812:

> We can all feel, or imagine, the regret with which the ruins of cities, once the capitals of empires, are beheld: the reflections suggested by such objects are too trite to require recapitulation. (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* Byron's note to 2.1)

With telegrammatic brevity, Eliot evokes those reflections in *The Waste Land*:

> What is the city over the mountains
> Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal (*CPP* 48)

Eliot's note to these lines makes clear their place in the iconography of empire. He quotes Hermann Hesse:

> Schon ist halb Europa, schon ist zumindest der halbe Osten Europas auf dem Wege zu Chaos.
>
> ["Already half of Europe, already at least half of Eastern Europe is on the road to chaos." (my translation)] (*CPP* 54)

Though Eliot left out Rome, whose fall into moral decay Gibbon had described, these lines rework Gibbon's theme, which had been revived for the Romantics with Volney's *Ruins.* The poem reviews the fall of empires through a deciphering of their hieroglyphic remains, inscribing on them the contemporary anxiety of imperial decline. Eliot's artistic evocation of such fears gained power precisely through an aesthetics of "encrypted" meaning that required both digging up and decoding. Through psychological deftness and indirection, the poem offers us the thrill of metaphorically reading the wreckage ourselves, as we sift through literary layers, textual fragments, allusions. It invites us to contemplate the ruins of the civilization in which we live,

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to muse on time and history, obviously, but also to notice familiar processes at work in our world: moral decay, invasion by barbaric "tribes," the corruption of the (imperial) center.

As Byron noted, such a reading of ruins already had a long tradition in 1812. The Romantics had particularly savored it—including Byron himself, as in *Don Juan*:

> the eternal surge
> Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
> Our bubbles. As the old burst, new emerge,
> Lash'd from the foam of ages, while the graves
> Of empires heave but like some passing wave.
> (*Don Juan* 15.99)

The Romantics also anticipate the moderns in their sense that ruins signify their belatedness, their inadequacy, in lamenting of which they will write great literature. The Swiss painter of Byron's era, Johann Heinrich Fussli, had memorialized this theme in "The Artist's Despair Before the Grandeur of Ancient Ruins" (cf. Springer 6–7).

A major poem in the tradition of wreckage reading is Shelley's "Ozymandias," written after Shelley visited the British Museum with Horace Smith. A statue of Ramses II inspired Smith to attempt a sonnet, which he titled "On a Stupendous Leg of Granite, Discovered Standing by Itself in the Deserts of Egypt, With the Inscription Inserted Below." Shelley then wrote his own version. As with titles, so with poems; where Smith plods, Shelley is crisp and allusive. But Smith's sonnet is instructive because it makes manifest what is latent in Shelley's:

> In Egypt's sandy silence, all alone,
> Stands a gigantic Leg, which far off throws
> The only shadow that the desert knows.
> "I am great Ozymandias," saith the stone,
> "The King of kings; this mighty city shows
> The wonders of my hand." The city's gone!
> Naught but the leg remaining to disclose
> The sight of that forgotten Babylon.
> We wonder, and some hunter may express
> Wonder like ours, when through the wilderness
> Where London stood, holding the wolf in chase,
> He meets some fragment huge and stops to guess
> What wonderful but unrecorded race
> Once dwelt in that annihilated place. (126)

Smith has set up a city sequence like *The Waste Land*'s "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London." Smith's sequence might read: "Luxor London [???]." British culture—erased—takes its place in a

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cyclical history: "The future can but imitate the past, / And instability alone will last" (Smith 42).

Shelley's version emphasizes the power of the artist over the ruler. Parallels to the British nation and its empire are left undrawn, as Shelley gives tyranny a "visage" and invites us to attribute Ozymandias's fall to moral failure:

> I met a traveller from an antique land
> Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
> Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
> Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
> And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
> Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
> The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
> Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away. (375)

For both Smith and Shelley, the vision evoked by Ramses II's statue is a warning and a challenge. On one hand, it speaks to the hubris of the state, leading, in Smith's case, to a premature elegy on the British empire. On the other hand, it partakes of Volney's liberal politics:

> Hail, solitary ruins, holy sepulchres, and silent walls! . . . What useful lessons, what affecting and profound reflections, you suggest to him who knows how to consult you! When the whole earth, in chains and silence, bowed the neck before its tyrants, you had already proclaimed the truths which they abhor, and confounding the dust of the king with that of the meanest slave, had announced to man the sacred dogma of EQUALITY. (Volney 19)

Smith's evocation of an already-forgotten England derives from Volney, whose hieratic speaker says: "Who knows . . . but that such may one day be the abandonment of our countries?" When the listener responds, "At these words, my eyes filled with tears," he is exhorted: "[I]nterrogate these ruins! Read the lessons which they present to you!" (Volney 26, 27).

The Waste Land plays upon this register of cultural and historical readings—though with a huge difference in political and philosophic intent. Volney cited the pyramids as an example of government waste (54). Eliot has other observations in mind, although Volney and Eliot

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may not stand so far apart as first appears. We have had a tendency to ignore the ways in which Romantic radicalism succumbs to imperialism, and "Ozymandias" certainly does not preclude an Anglo-Eurocentric faith in white racial superiority (cf. Leask 79, 90). Nonetheless, Volney espoused a forward-looking liberalism that he believed the ruins at Palmyra supported. For Volney and Shelley, those ruins demonstrated the failure of elitist and aristocratic nations and the dawning of a new, revolutionary era of reason and equality. Not so for Eliot.

Similarities and differences between Eliot and Shelley sharpen when "Ozymandias" is compared to the following passage from "The Burial of the Dead." This passage stands distinct, as a tessera in the mosaic. It mimics in blank verse—most lines are pentameter—the sonnet form, complete with a final "couplet." Here, Eliot strikes a note in a register of time-worn images, echoing Shelley in both *form* and *content*:

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
> There is shadow under this red rock,
> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow at morning striding behind you
> Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
> *Frisch weht der Wind*
> *Der Heimat zu*
> *Mein Irisch Kind*
> *Wo weilest du?* *(CPP 38)*

Eliot sought to associate these lines with numerous biblical passages.[7] We know also that it includes lines originally drafted for "The Death of St. Narcissus" that refer us to "grey rock" (*Waste Land Facsimile* 91). Eliot changed the color, and, as Guy Davenport has said, he undoubtedly sought to evoke the ancient city of Petra, which had been discovered by Burckhardt just in time for Shelley to use it as a setting for "Alastor" (Davenport 17). Petra, now part of Jordan, was a flourishing trading city in 400 to 200 BC, and its rose-red cliffs became a romantic symbol of fallen empire. Petra traded with the Phoenician Empire, to whose fall Eliot also alludes: "You who turn the wheel and look to windward, / Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (*CPP* 38, 47).

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While Volney and Shelley interpreted the ruins of Palmyra as inspiration for reform, *The Waste Land* finds "no relief" in the red rock of Petra. The rocks suggest no thoughts of progress, and the poem finally envisions "shoring up," not starting anew. Volney's liberal method of reading the ruins has been subverted, and the overall mood resists and condemns "progress." In both the images evoked and its fragmented patterns, *The Waste Land* suggests a conservative view of history. We arrive at this view by imaginatively *working through* and assembling the bits and pieces. And because the poem is not interpretable without acquaintance with its allusions, we are encouraged, if we care enough to pursue the "meaning," to adopt the cultural values being mourned. With image after image, allusion after allusion, *The Waste Land* powerfully evokes the betrayal and besiegement of waning empire, themes treated explicitly in the final section:

> We think of the key, each in his prison
> Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
> Only at nightfall, aetheral rumours
> Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus (*CPP* 49)

Hemmed in by traitors, contemptuous of the rabble, Coriolanus dies because he compromises for peace rather than fighting on. At best, *The Waste Land* seems to suggest a private liberation from an individual prison ("Shall I at least set my lands in order"). Eliot's contemporary, Georg Lukács, would describe this as modernism's regressive ideology because it denies the efficacy of political action for social progress; and though Lukács's defense of socialist realism as superior to modernist "isolationism" falls short, he has nonetheless correctly identified Eliot's cultural politics.[8]

The concluding lines of the "red rock" passage also reinforce themes of entrapment and betrayal. They come from the opening of the first act of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, in which a ship brings Isolde, with her ill-fated escort, Tristan, back to marry King Marke of Cornwall. "Frisch weht der Wind der Heimat zu" sings a sailor hidden in the rigging of the ship, thinking of his Irish sweetheart. These words unleash an emotional response in Isolde that will lead her to her own and Tristan's undoing. In the same passage of *The Waste Land*, Eliot quotes the opera again. "Oed' und leer das Meer" comes from the opera's third and final act. Dying in Brittany, Tristan now awaits the return of Isolde. The opera underscores the crushing disaster of this reunion when Isolde arrives just in time to clutch Tristan in her arms as he dies. King Marke arrives too late to relieve the suffering lovers, and Isolde sings out her broken heart and dies. These allusions make a

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pattern: the ruins of Petra; Coriolanus's downfall; the failure of the Arthurian dream, evoked in the desolate ("Oed") and empty ("leer") sea; and Tristan's and Isolde's histrionic demise. These images help orchestrate Eliot's version of what I have been calling the British *Götterdämmerung.*

There is also a talismanic function that the failures and collapses portrayed in *The Waste Land* and "Ozymandias" have served. They encode certain fears in order to exorcise them. They lead us to ask how an imperial culture can avoid the doom of all previous empires. The answer seems to be: by being morally just. Since empires are invariably founded on injustices, the task is impossible. All that can be gained is a temporary stay of execution. This may be prolonged (so some believe) if one reads the wreckage of past empires continuously and is sobered thereby. Laurence Goldstein summarizes: "Ubiquitous in literature as in geographical location, ruins were a means of mortifying in the public those worldly desires which caused the great empires, like Persepolis and Egypt, to decline and fall" (3). After Volney, ruins became fixtures in Romantic gardens, a predilection spoofed in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia. The Waste Land* might serve such a talismanic function, though its implication that the "fragments" cannot be clearly read, but only jumbled together in some possibly arbitrary order, leaves us in a different moral universe from Shelley's and Volney's. In Eliot's world, we are only enlightened in the sense that we more deeply understand how lost we have become under the curse of history.

Eliot claimed to make a direct connection between the rituals of curse removal, Christ's martyrdom, and what he calls "the present decay of Eastern Europe" (*CPP* 53). By placing the "decay" at the eastern margin of Europe, the note echoes the "east to west" stereotype of imperial corruption. The "decay" itself is racialized in such phrases as "Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant" (*CPP* 43). The name "Eugenides" lightly evokes "eugenics," playing off the era's hackneyed Spenglerian fear of Western decline. Such elements allowed *The Waste Land* to reflect British frustration with fumbling democratic institutions, and the consequent xenophobic desire to "purge" infiltrating elements (like those Indians who revulsed Bertrand Russell) whose immigration stemmed from those colonial endeavors. To retain colonial lands meant such headaches and nightmares. Through many allusions, but especially to those of the Grail rituals, *The Waste Land* clearly dwells on a Western sensation of being "cursed." Of course, one requires a guidebook like those for Alexandria and Luxor to perceive such a "message" in the poem.

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But that was precisely the intention. Though *The Waste Land*'s *bricolage* and ventriloquism first felt like a Punch-and-Judy slap in the face, literary scholars soon came to recognize it as balm for their gloomy fraternity, for it gave a scientific air of "modernity" to traditionalist notions of literary canon. That air wafted from the anthropology and ethnology to which Eliot alluded. Better than this, the poem's allusions constituted a web of shibboleths and secret handshakes that demanded initiation for the "ephebe." An elitist poetic enterprise would provide ample opportunity for Poundian scolding at the ignorance of readers: "The thought of what America would be like / If the classics had a wide circulation troubles my sleep!" (Pound, "Cantico del Sole"). At the same time, *The Waste Land*'s and the *Cantos*' carefully arranged disarray would guarantee that the texts proved indecipherable to the uninitiated. As Alan Golding puts it, a New Critical reading of *The Waste Land* showed, above all, that only a "pro" could do criticism (78).

A professionalized elitism harmonized with the era's strong reactionary politics. It brought the agrarians to embrace the poem, after they first balked. And it fit the British conservative conviction that imperial survival was a matter of skill and will. Lord Curzon had written thus in 1907 (Bennett 356–57). And in 1914, James Bryce wrote that, like Rome, Britain's triumphs had come "by force of character" (54). The role literature played in this public handwringing and exhortation has been explored by Patrick Brantlinger, who believes that the modernists' "radical critique" of Anglo-European civilization led naturally to imperialism and fascism (269). Eliot shared intensely in the anxiety over the impact of democrats and liberals on a degenerating British culture. As Asher has said, "[T]he antidemocratic animus of Maurras, Eliot, and the southern New Critics at least, placed them all in sympathy with the losing side in their countries' civil wars, giving rise to theories of historical and literary decline" (158). In allying himself with those who prescribed rule-by-the-few, he subscribed to a vitalist theory of political dominance—a theory of *raw energy* and virility. For example, Eliot praised Wyndham Lewis as possessing "the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man" (*Egoist* 5 [September 1918]: 106). This fetishizing of primitive energy typifies a reactionary respect for raw power and imposed order in the face of social deterioration. Disintegration provided the unifying theme in Eliot's Clark Lectures at Cambridge in 1926, in which he described the history of poetry as one of "progressive deterioration . . . since the thirteenth century. If I am right about poetry, then this deterioration is probably only one aspect of a general deterioration" (*Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* 227).

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The lack of cohesion lamented in *The Waste Land* was also an obsession of the instigators of "English Studies" (Stanley Baldwin, George Gordon, and I. A. Richards) after the release of the Newbolt Report. The report envisioned literature as a source of cultural unity, and Eliot's poetry and criticism were drawn into this Arnoldian struggle. His notions of tradition and "impersonality" actually played a major role in colonialist literary study. I. A. Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) laid the foundation for a British scholarly enterprise that Chris Baldick accurately describes as "expansionist" and "colonizing," and which led to a "reversal" in the course of English criticism, turning it in "a profoundly conservative and obscurantist direction" (225, 234). It is true that Eliot claimed to regret that *The Waste Land* had become a touchstone of the literature curriculum and a fashionable cultural artifact. He also rejected Richards's crude polemic that "poetry can save us."[9] But Baldick rightly points out that when Eliot reacted against Richards, "he was reacting to what in many ways was a brainchild of his own" (158). *The Waste Land*'s lamentation of a European "Heritage Lost," together with "Tradition and the Individual Talent," affected many colonial literatures and their criticisms. Promoters of English as a discipline, like Richards, tried to align its methodology with that of the classics, which it was replacing (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 3). Certainly, modernist classicism altered the American literary landscape. As Eliot put it in 1925: "Neglect of Greek means for Europe a *relapse into unconsciousness*" (*Criterion* 3:341–44). And the later Eliot wrote, "But we can at least try to save . . . the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2,000 years" (*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* 124).

It is ironic that Eliot was admired in India and Egypt as a *critic* of empire. In Egypt, many believed that *The Waste Land* had been written in the 40s or 50s as an attack on Western culture (Shaheen 151–52). With anti-British and anti-French feeling running high in the Arab world of the 50s, Eliot appeared as a hero attacking the rottenness of Western civilization. This celebration carried a price, however, for Arab critics emphasized the *formal innovations* and *impersonality* promoted by Ransom and Richards through the New Criticism. Rashad Rushdi, a professor of English at Cairo University during this period, was a particularly powerful advocate whose "blunt support of form and blind attack on content," according to Mohammad Shaheen, negatively influenced the whole Arab literary scene of the 50s and 60s (155). Egyptian literature was shaped by imperialism's aesthetic backwash, Mahir

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Fareed concluded in his study of Eliot's reception among Arab writers (192). In India, Eliot was revered for having included Hindu concepts and Sanskrit words in *The Waste Land*, but enthusiasm has waned as it has become clearer how those sources were used (see Trivedi).

The theory for Eliot's aesthetic practice, provided in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), claimed that aesthetic effects were "catalyzed" by the juxtaposition of images, the poet being "a bit of finely filiated platinum" (*Selected Essays* 17). This pretension to a "science" of literary creation is heavily indebted to Bergson and James, and its theoretical base is cracked, as I have argued elsewhere.[10] But cracked or not, it still epitomizes the modernized aesthetic Eliot bequeathed. And whether poets believed in the alchemy of the "objective correlative" or not, one could hardly ignore its power to evoke a modern sense of *disaster*. The aesthetics of sifting through the rubble reinforced convictions of western victimization by ineluctable processes of decline. This sense is naturally not unique to the British political climate of the 20s, but that era was one of increasing duress for the British imperial core. Through Hulme, Eliot had located a method of composition that expressed the British mood of living in the empire's twilight days. Hulme's technical innovations and insights seemed somehow validated, for Eliot and Pound, by his death in the Great War, which is strongly present in "The Burial of the Dead." Paul Fussell has even argued that the poem is primarily a "memory of war," presumably as experienced by a noncombatant (325–26). But other events also contributed to this validation of Hulme's politics and poetics as central to *The Waste Land*.

Independence movements in India and Egypt were already hot news in November 1922, when a typical pamphlet warned the British public that Gandhi's moral authority might prove well-nigh irresistible, carrying the revolt far beyond India's borders (Wellock). This sense of imminent loss of yet another colony had been reinforced earlier in 1922 when Britain had recognized Egypt as a kingdom under the rule of Fuad I. In November, the tomb of Tutankhamen had been discovered, and it became a flashpoint for conflicts between the French, British, and local authorities. While the tomb played a minor role in the push and shove of Anglo-Egyptian politics, it took center stage in British and American press coverage of the period. The Tut discovery illustrates how well *The Waste Land*'s aesthetics of wreckage embodied the politically and culturally reactionary emotions of an upper-class and upper-middle-class British readership watching things "deteriorate."

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At first, the political implications of the Tut excavation were eclipsed by its sensational richness. Commercialism ran rampant, and patent offices were swamped by applications for Tut trademarks as a flood of fake Egyptian relics was released on both sides of the Atlantic. Potboilers like F. M. Burns's *Tut-ankh-amen* and Mary Gaunt's *The Mummy Moves* appeared. Cambridge students declared a holiday, opening the mock tomb of a ruler named "Toot-an-kum-in." In 1924, the British Empire Exhibition featured a supposedly accurate reproduction of the tomb; 200,000 people crowded the exhibition grounds on opening day, most of them seeking unsuccessfully to catch a glimpse. By this time, however, they could read in the newspapers that politics had overtaken the excavators.

Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon had entered the tomb on November 26, 1922, just three weeks after Egyptians had gone to the polls for the first time, and just after *The Waste Land* had appeared in *The Criterion* and *The Dial.* We know now that they first entered the tomb unsupervised, and therefore illegally, stole some objects, then published a cover-up (Hoving 89 ff.). They also offended the local and world press by awarding on January 10, 1923, exclusive news rights to the London *Times*, thus forcing Egyptian newswriters to ask the British for news about antiquities discovered on their own soil. H. Rider Haggard would remember feeling relief on being told that the *Times* would send someone else to Egypt to write about Tut, since the "world's press is furious with Lord Carnarvon and the *Times,*" and the whole thing struck him as "a sordid quarrel" (253). Haggard did eventually travel to Luxor in 1924 to cover the Tut story. In December 1922, five major articles appeared in the London *Times* on Egypt, more than half of them about the politically volatile situation. In 1923, Tut and independence were major stories. In archaeology as in politics, the issue was control.

British and American excavators considered themselves the saviors of Egypt's history. They had some reasons. The scholars that accompanied Napoleon to Egypt in his campaign of 1799–1800 saw Arabs burning mummies as fuel (Manniche 98), and Twain joked in *Innocents Abroad* that Egyptians burned "mummies three thousand years old, purchased by the ton or by the graveyard" to power locomotives (2:386). Trade in Egyptian artifacts and relics goes back to the Roman empire at least. But the modern business in stones and bones still shocked with its crassness. Flaubert delightedly described visiting in 1850 an Egyptian dealer in antiquities whose wares, including mummies, were stacked casually around his barren dwelling. Flaubert

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was encountering a culture thoroughly controlled by an ancient tourist trade in "stones that so many people have thought about, that so many men have come to see. . . . Think of the number of bourgeois stares they have received!" (170–71). This commercialization was, naturally, driven by European money, and the desperation of the Egyptian people might have excused their venality. Flaubert saw families living in tombs, having fashioned doors out of coffin lids (174).

Yet the white trader in antiquities—like E. Wallis Budge, a rip-off artist, according to Brian Fagan's *Rape of the Nile*—was seen as an Alan Quatermain or Indiana Jones; his Egyptian counterpart was portrayed as a smelly, illiterate, carious Iago (Fagan 295 ff.). Despite the prevailing view that British and American excavators were noble and unselfish—and that modern Egyptians were gutless, thieving, backstabbing opportunists—the Tut case aroused discomfort about British behavior. *The Star* editorialized in 1923:

> There was something inherently indecent in the original plan of rifling a tomb and unwinding the mummy of a dead pharaoh in the interest ostensibly of science, but in reality of the first, second, and third rights of publications. . . . But it becomes amusing when specialists in archaeology fall to quarreling among themselves over the spoils like pariah dogs over a scratched up corpse. (qtd. in el-Mallakh 90)

Arthur Weigall, a former Inspector General of Antiquities for Upper Egypt who had been instrumental in constructing doors and grilles to protect the tombs against further desecration, suggested in 1924 that the British public would not have allowed Egyptians to "dig up our Kings in Westminster Abbey" and cart off the remains (23). Earlier, in the wake of Carnarvon's disastrous decision to give the story to the *Times*, Weigall had written a letter of warning to the excavators:

> [Y]ou found a tomb in a public place belonging to the Egyptian government . . . a discovery belonging [to] . . . an Egypt seething with hatred of England. . . . [You have] behave[d] like brigands sworn to secrecy—in fact, to the native mind, like *thieves*. (qtd. in Hoving 163–64)

Perhaps Carter was the more stung by this criticism because he had in fact already defiled the tomb, covering up his illegal entry after he and Carnarvon had spirited some minor objects out of the crypt. In any case, he exacerbated the problem by becoming completely intransigent, and finally shutting down the tomb in protest of Egyptian "interference" with the Anglo-American excavation efforts.

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Within four weeks, in April 1924, Zaglul Pasha had locked Carter out and come to visit his people's tomb, cheered by thousands of Egyptians shouting anti-British slogans. The tomb, unfortunately for Carter, would become the first that a European excavator had wholly lost to the Egyptians themselves. In the proud 1930 edition of the British Museum's guide to its Egyptian collections, there is absolutely nothing to show for all Carnarvon's and Carter's work:

> At [Tutankhamen's] death he was buried in the small tomb discovered by the late Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Howard Carter, which was found almost intact and full of a marvellous treasure of objects of art and use of all kinds *now in the Cairo museum.* (*General Introductory Guide,* 358 [my italics])

For the first time in the modern era, the spoils of archaeological work had been completely denied to a British excavator. Carter's folly had made the newspapers across three continents on a weekly basis throughout 1923 and 1924.

The Waste Land had captured the hubris and confused gallantry of such British late-imperial moments, as it presented both the decadent state of a culture and its romance of a lost origin buried in antiquity. Most of all, the curse motif presents a strong parallel between the Tut story and *The Waste Land.* Five months after entering the tomb, in April 1923, Lord Carnarvon died. Rumors of a "curse" ("Death shall come on swift wings to him that toucheth the tomb of the pharaoh") sprang up immediately and have refused to die. Fear of occult revenge was so strong that two days after the news of Lord Carnarvon's death, the *Daily Express* ran this headline: "Egyptian Collectors in Panic / Sudden Rush to Hand Over their Treasures to Museum / Groundless Fears" (April 7, 1923).

Arthur Conan Doyle fed curse fears that spring of 1923 by crediting them (el-Mallakh 95). There were other corroborative events. One 1924 article told of the death of Professor White, of Leeds University, who returned from Egypt bringing with him many apocryphal books, some previously unknown, procured from a Coptic monastery. His suicide note read, "I knew there was a curse on me, though I had leave to take those manuscripts to Cairo. The monks told me the curse would work all the same. Now it has done so" (el-Mallakh 126). Thomas Hoving, former Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and American organizer of the Tut tour of the 70s, lamented that the curse is as well known today as Tut himself (229). Perhaps there *was* a curse on the tomb, for Carter died without completing his catalog, and the

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Tut artifacts lie disintegrating in Cairo's underfunded museum. But the Tut excavation had discovered not a single document—and certainly no curse (Hoving 365).

Curse texts are a rarity in Egyptology. One of the few actual tomb curses was found on the mummy case of Khaph Amen, a high priest whose tomb was discovered in 1879:

> May the cobra on my head spit flames into thy face, and may thy head be in the place of my feet. . . . Such a curse is the vengeance which is hidden in my body throughout all eternity, and which shall overtake whomsoever disturbs my body in its tomb. He or she shall have no grave, and after an arduous journey shall be attacked by wild beasts, and his or her bones shall be left to be washed by the falling rain. (el-Mallakh 129)

This describes a disintegration and silence that fascinated Eliot and Pound, and to which they repeatedly alluded in myth and legend—Kora in Hell, Osiris, Phlebas the Phoenician, Philomel, Titus Andronicus, and the Fisher King. An unmarked grave haunts Ulysses in Pound's "Canto I": "our friend Elpenor, / Unburied, cast on the wide earth." As whispering currents pick Phlebas's bones, his life is rewound like thread onto the spool, and he spins down the drain: "As he rose and fell / He passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool" (*CPP* 46). And the final section of *The Waste Land* pictures a chapel yard with grass growing "over the tumbled graves" (48), a foreshadowing of "prayers to broken stone" of "The Hollow Men" and of "old stones that cannot be deciphered" of "East Coker" (*CPP* 58, 129). All these are signs for an erasure that echoes Shelley's and Volney's melancholia without their revolutionary fire.

Reviewing the history of Eliot's aesthetic innovations, which still command my strong respect and fascination, I am struck by their largely negative impact. *The Waste Land*'s content and design affected the development of literature throughout Britain's former colonies—including those of North America—in ways that recall the curse it seemed to exorcize with its "Shantih shantih shantih" (*CPP* 51). That word is now remembered by generations of students as "the Peace which passeth understanding," a translation that wrenches the complexities of the Upanishads into an orthodox Christian notion of grace (Trivedi 47). Take such gestures and multiply them into the patterns I have tried to describe, and you seize the thing that caused Irish poet and critic Tom Paulin to say that Eliot's notion of tradition is "an artificial and polemical construct that . . . still weighs like a nightmare on English literary studies" (290).

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Like many others who were educated in a new critical atmosphere, I have puzzled over why Eliot's work defined "literary modernity" for so many and for so long. Though the work of broadening our sense of the modern has proceeded apace, it has always followed in Eliot's wake. Eliot's genius for mimicry of British mannerisms, attitudes, values, and shyness gained him acceptance in Britain and popularity in America, where a British mien made for successful lectures and readings. Pound once said that Eliot had "arrived at the supreme Eminence among English critics largely through disguising himself as a corpse" (Chace 221), an allusion perhaps to Eliot's practice around 1922 of applying green powder to his face before attending certain parties with his literary contemporaries (Ackroyd 136–37). Through this cadaverous makeup, he apparently sought to merge with—as he mocked—a culture aware of its clock running down. Eliot resented incursions of the "clever Jew undergraduate," with his lack of discipline, his "philistine aristocracy," and his *American* bent—like Maxwell Bodenheim. As Edward Said has observed, the colonial personality models itself on the imperial one, and Eliot had worked consciously on his persona, including especially its class consciousness and resentments (74).

And despite his ironical tone, Eliot had also worked hard at the defense of Englishness and empire implicit in his aesthetics and explicit in his criticism. By 1918 he had formulated the pattern of elitism in which he sought to take a place: "[T]he forces of deterioration are a large crawling mass, and the forces of development half a dozen men" ("Observations" 69). Already he had embraced the belief he later expressed in "Little Gidding" that "History is now and England" (*CPP* 145). By creating a poem encoding imperial curses, and by making it function as a sort of journey through the catacombs of classical literature, he refashioned the aesthetics of empire for a "modern" age. We live and write in its aftermath.

NOTES

[1] *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950,* 129. Hereafter cited in the text as *CPP.*

[2] T. S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1929) vii. Eliot announced in this introduction that he would be publishing three "small volumes which I have in preparation: *The School of Donne, The Outline of Royalism,* and *The Principles of Modern Heresy.*" None of these was published, though the last title evolved into *After Strange Gods* and the first has now been resurrected as *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry* (1993), listed under Works Cited.

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[3] For example, John Harrison's *The Reactionaries: A Study of the Anti-democratic Intelligentsia* (New York: Schocken, 1966), while it is a piece of 60s academic radicalism weakened by its tunnel vision, nonetheless charted a course that William Chace would follow with *The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot* (1973), a careful exploration of the reactionary heart of modernism. Many others have now described and commented on these continuities, most recently Kenneth Asher in *T. S. Eliot and Ideology*:

> The difficulty that has beset Eliot scholarship from the very beginning is how one fits together the Eliot who led an apparently apolitical aesthetic revolution and the Eliot who abruptly (or so it seemed) announced himself to be classicist, royalist, and Anglo-Catholic in 1928. (160)

[4] It is true that Hulme and Eliot had imbibed Bergsonism, and that *The Waste Land* reflects an intuitionism that remained integral to Eliot's poetry and criticism, as I have argued in *Eliot, Bergson, and American Literature* (Louisville: UP of Kentucky, 1986). At the same time, *The Waste Land*'s aesthetics fit in a tradition that cannot be divorced from his cultural politics.

[5] Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." Rept. in *The Critical Tradition*, David Richter, ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989) 382–96.

[6] See Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," a chapter in *Structural Anthropology* (1958, trans. 1963). I have benefited enormously from David Spurr's discussion of these topics, not only in the article listed below but also in his *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993).

[7] Ezekiel 2.1; Ecclesiastes 12.5; Isaiah 2.19; also the journey to Emmaus, which Eliot claims provides one of three major themes in "What the Thunder Said" (*CPP* 53).

[8] Georg Lukács, "The Ideology of Modernism" (1956). Rept. in *The Critical Tradition*, David Richter, ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989) 597–611.

[9] This is Eliot's verdict in a review of Richards's *Science and Poetry*, published in *The Dial* 82 (Mar. 1927): 239–43.

[10] See "Modernism and Science: The Case of Pound's *ABC of Reading*" *Paideuma* 18 (Spring and Fall 1989) 187–96.

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Depression and Ted Hughes's *Crow*, or through the Looking Glass and What Crow Found There

Paul Bentley

Two aspects of Ted Hughes's *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* have proved hard to swallow for some critics, namely, the book's language and its imagery, or as Roy Fuller puts it, "the pathological violence of its language, its anti-human ideas, its sadistic imagery" (297). Fuller points out three things here, although it might be more accurate to speak of *Crow*'s antiliberal humanist ideas, assuming that *Crow* has any ideas of its own, which is not certain. In any case, the epithet "anti-human" seems to reflect here only the ideas, or rather ideals, of a certain type of criticism. Writing from much the same point of view, Geoffrey Thurley finds *Crow* "a somewhat inhuman, even brutal book, with none of the broad strength of the best of Hughes's earlier poems. It remains to be seen whether Hughes's abandonment of a human perspective is ultimately justifiable" (189). The abandonment of a "human perspective" in *Crow* is really no more than the abandonment of the transparent language of a "metaphysical" self, a language that bears no recognition of its material (linguistic, cultural, unconscious) determinants. If the book can be conceived of as a reflective surface, then it is a cracked one, one that fails to give any return on humanist preconceptions, or rather returns them in distorted fashion, in pieces. For the critic anticipating the corroboration of certain literary expectations or ideals, *Crow* seems to allow of only one response: In Calvin Bedient's words, "Hughes is a total nihilist," while *Crow* is "the croak of nihilism itself" (101, 114).

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A CARNIVAL

Other criteria than a "human[ist] perspective" are clearly needed if *Crow* is to be read as anything more than a nihilistic lack of returns, as a book that sadistically refuses to reciprocate any "human idea." Calvin Bedient touches on the crux of the question: "In most of these poems Hughes wastes himself. A master of language who tosses words on the page—can any aesthetic justify this" (114)? Given the plurality of discourses that inform *Crow*—biblical narratives, myth, the cartoon strip, science, psychoanalysis—and bearing in mind the slapstick way in which these discourses are thrown together, the book might be "justified" after Bakhtin as carnivalesque literature. What Bakhtin calls "the direct authorial word" (*Dialogic* 301) is difficult to locate in *Crow*; in Bakhtin's words, the poet here is speaking "*through* language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized, become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates" (*Dialogic* 299). To read *Crow*'s words at face value is therefore to miss the point. Hughes's seemingly evasive comment that the poems "wrote themselves"[1] is to be taken literally: The figure of Crow is as much as anything else a device for testing out cultural narratives and meanings that are already there, that have already been written; Crow does not so much produce meaning as reaccentuate it, blackly.

Crow's relationship to language is thematicized in a number of poems: "Crow's First Lesson," "A Disaster," "The Battle of Osfrontalis," "Crow Goes Hunting." What these poems "materialize" at the level of theme is the radical *otherness* of the word as experienced by Crow:

> Words came with Life Insurance policies—
> Crow feigned dead.
> Words came with warrants to conscript him—
> Crow feigned mad.
> Words came with blank cheques—
> He drew Minnie Mice on them. ("The Battle of Osfrontalis")

—etcetera. Figured as an agent of negativity with regard to the ideologically loaded word, Crow's only way forward in his quest for self-definition is through a kind of discursive loophole. This loophole is dialogical discourse as proposed by Bakhtin and elaborated by Kristeva: "In its structures, writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis" (*Desire* 77). Neither cartoon nor Bible story, neither poetry nor prose, *Crow* improvises its own dialogic space that is littered with the fragments of discursive collisions, collisions that concretize and relativize the "mish-

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mash of scripture and physics" in and through which Crow is, in Hughes's words, "intermittently conscious" ("Reply" 111).

On this reading—*Crow* as carnivalesque discourse—the book's violent and bizarre imagery involving bodily distortion and dismemberment is assimilable to Bakhtin's notion of the "grotesque," defined by Bakhtin as "The specific type of imagery inherent to the culture of folk humor in all its forms and manifestations" (*Rabelais* 30). "Material" processes of birth, death, copulation, growth, disintegration, and dismemberment around which the grotesque bodily image gravitates are opposed by Bakhtin to "the classic images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development" (*Rabelais* 25). Seen in this light, the imagery of *Crow* seems to articulate a kind of grotesque groundswell (of bodily life), rupturing and denaturing the naturalized codes of Judeo-Christian morality and Western scientific objectivism, codes that otherwise threaten to foreclose Crow's attempts to figure his own meaning.

Yet for all its indulgence in carnivalistic degradation, the language of *Crow* remains overtly devitalized, indifferent, expendable, void of affect. The book's formal reliance on the liturgical format seems only to reinforce the monotonous, arbitrary feel of it all. As Bedient notes, "The attention [of the reader] soon stops dead like chalk hitting a wet spot on the board" (116). Recourse to Bakhtin's ideas on "carnivalesque" literature or "dialogism," while being fully relevant to *Crow*, cannot finally account for this sort of language. It is enough to listen again to some of the more characteristic poem endings in order to hear how the carnival itself becomes reified, as if as the poems play themselves out they are simultaneously being distanced, devalued, and discarded:

> But Crow only peered.
> Then took a step or two forward,
> Grabbed this creature by the slackskin nape,
>
> Beat the hell out of it, and ate it. ("A Horrible Religious Error")
>
> And so the smile not even Leonardo
> Could have fathomed
> Flew off into the air, the rubbish heap of laughter
> Screams, discretions, indiscretions etcetera ("Crow Improvises")
>
> 'I give up,' he said. He gave up.
>
> Creation had failed again. ("A Bedtime Story")

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> And everything goes to hell. ("Apple Tragedy")
>
> BANG!
>
> He was blasted to nothing. ("Truth Kills Everybody")

Hughes talks of the "throwaway expressiveness" (Faas 13) of Shakespeare's language; on these terms, the language and tone here are simply "throwaway." In an interview Hughes states:

> The first idea of *Crow* was really an idea of style. . . . The idea was originally just to write his songs, the songs that a Crow would sing. In other words, songs with no music whatsoever, in a super-simple and a super-ugly language which would in a way shed everything except just what he wanted to say without any other consideration and that's the basis of the style of the whole thing. (Faas 20)

The phrase "shed everything," while pointing up the disenchanted, deadpan feel of the book's language, suggests also a kind of regression. Discussing what he refers to as the "profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization," Lacan writes:

> If the subject did not rediscover in a regression—often pushed right back to the "mirror stage"—the enclosure of a stage in which his ego contains its imaginary exploits, there would hardly be any assignable limits to the credulity to which he must succumb. . . . (70)

It is a regression of this order that is suggested by the language and imagery of *Crow*, and which can be mapped theoretically with reference to Lacan's conception of the "mirror stage" in child development.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Bakhtin's idea of the "typical 'carnival anatomy'—an enumeration of the parts of the dismembered body" (*Dostoevsky* 102)—finds a significant parallel in Lacan's identification of anxieties about bodily fragmentation present in the formation of the ego, anxieties revealed in dreams by certain psychically charged images Lacan terms "imagos of the fragmented body": "images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body" (11). These images, which both Lacan and Bakhtin find realized in the paintings of Hieronymous Bosch (Lacan 4, 11; *Rabelais* 27), pervade *Crow*.

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> With here, brains in hands, for example,
> And there, legs in a treetop. ("Crow's Account of the Battle")

Lacan locates the genesis of these "phantasmagorias" (12) at the mirror stage, a pivotal time in childhood between the ages of 6 and 18 months when the child, "still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence" (2), first comes to recognize his own image in a mirror. What is significant for Lacan is that this specular image, "jubilantly" assumed by the child, "situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction" (2). In other words, the promise of bodily unity and coherence given in the virtual space of the mirror captivates the child and sets it in "discordance with his own reality" (2), that is, the reality of the child's bodily uncoordination and helplessness at this time. This primary identification with an alienating mirage lays the ground for all secondary, what Lacan terms "imaginary," identifications through which the ego will determine itself:

> It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and the form on which this organization of the passions that he will call his ego is based. (19)

It is henceforth in the maintenance of what Lacan refers to as "the armour of an alienating identity" (4), through the mechanics of identification, that imaginary effects are manifested in the subject. The fantasy of the body "in-bits-and-pieces" is a kind of side effect of the assumption of this "armour," and is prone to erupt at moments of "aggressive disintegration in the individual" (4).

Shamanic fantasies of death and dismemberment, in which Hughes interests himself and whose motifs can be found in all his major work, seem to belong to the same psychic terrain Lacan delineates here. It is in *Crow*, however, that this regression or disintegration is pushed back the farthest, to a stage where all attempted identifications fail and where language itself becomes reified to the point of apathy as Crow remains unable to solidify himself into any signifier.

This regression as such would account for the enigmatic and at times grotesque images of laughter, smiling, and grinning that occur throughout *Crow*, about which Hughes says: "I'm not quite sure what they signify" (Faas 18).[1] Kristeva locates the origin of laughter "Chronologically and logically long before the mirror stage" (*Desire* 283). Kelly Oliver sums up Kristeva's position:

> Prior to its constitution as a subject, let alone a speaking subject, the infant makes "music" as a direct release of drive. It expels

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> sounds in order to release tension, either pain or pleasure, in order to survive. One such sound is laughter. (35)

As the infant begins to develop a sense of its own bodily coherence (the mirror stage), laughter becomes bound up with the confounding of this ideal:

> As we know, children lack a sense of humor (humor presupposes the superego and its bewildering). But they laugh easily when motor tension is linked to vision (a caricature is a visualization of bodily distortion, of an extreme, exaggerated movement, or of an unmastered movement); when a child's body is too rapidly set in motion by the adult (return to a motility defying its fixation, space, and place); when a sudden stop follows a movement (someone stumbles and falls). (*Desire* 284)

When in *Crow* "People's arms and legs fly off and fly on again / In laughter" ("In Laughter"), the implication seems to be that an experiential space has been rediscovered—what Kristeva calls "this archaic laughter-space" (*Desire* 285)—that defies the laws and logic of the known and constituted.

While a poem like "In Laughter" seems merely intent on celebrating this rediscovery, other instances of laughter in *Crow* generate more problematic implications:

> His hands covered with blood suddenly
> And now he ran from the children and ran through the house
> Holding his bloody hands clear of everything
> And ran along the road and into the wood
> And under the leaves he sat weeping
>
> And under the leaves he sat weeping
>
> Till he began to laugh ("Criminal Ballad")

The enigmatic switch from weeping to laughing points to a "bewildered" superego: A release of affective tension comes across that cannot find any social, religious, or ethical code to legitimate itself; hence the poem's title. In its oblique way, the poem registers a dissociation between affective life and the Western social contract, suggesting the bankruptcy of our religious and ethical systems.

Although the poems draw freely on the terms and concepts of psychoanalysis, these terms and concepts have no privileged hold on meaning here, as the savage parody of the Oedipus complex in "Song for a Phallus" indicates. Equally, Hughes's own earlier poetry does not escape the rout:

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> Drinking Beowulf's blood, and wrapped in his hide,
> Crow communes with poltergeists out of old ponds.
> ("Crowego")

Echoes of the Anglo-Saxon alliterative tradition in Hughes's first book *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957), the poet's interest in shamanism, the poetry as fishing metaphor in the early poem "Pike"—all here seem absurd, no longer adequate to Hughes's meaning, which has now effectively overshot the limits of language.

Hughes describes Crow's adventures thus:

> Having been created, he's put through various adventures and disasters and trials and ordeals, and the effect of these is to alter him not at all, then alter him a great deal, completely transform him, tear him to bits, put him together again, and produce him a little bit changed. And maybe his ambition is to become a man, which he never quite manages. ("Ted Hughes's *Crow*" 149)

God's attempt to teach Crow how to talk in "Crow's First Lesson" sets the pattern for the book:

> God tried to teach Crow how to talk.
> 'Love,' said God. 'Say, Love.'
> Crow gaped, and the white shark crashed into the sea
> And went rolling downwards, discovering its own depth.
>
> 'No, no,' said God, 'Say Love. Now try it. LOVE.'
> Crow gaped, and a bluefly, a tsetse, a mosquito
> Zoomed out and down
> To their sundry flesh-pots.

Crow's difficulty is that he cannot adapt to the alien discourses in which he finds himself placed, he cannot normalize himself within any single cultural code (here the Christian idea of God as Love)—hence his trials and ordeals. Some of the titles of the poems draw attention to the dilemma: "Crow Tries the Media," "Crow Paints Himself into a Chinese Mural." In other words, Crow cannot become a man because he cannot identify with men, with what it means to be a man in Western society. Looking in the mirror "For a glimpse of the usual grinning face" ("Crow's Vanity"), Crow is faced instead with fleeting, enigmatic images of burning gulfs and hanging gardens, as though the primary narcissistic identification, springboard for all secondary, social identifications, here found itself displaced by a fantasy of organic disarray. In short, the possibility of identification itself is suspended in *Crow*. Unable to settle within any language or idea, to fix the drives he embodies to available models of meaning, Crow can only utter an alien

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and empty language, a language that is felt to be meaningless. Insofar as it can be read as an address to a muse, the poem "Littleblood," coming as it does at the end of the book, suggests that nothing with any truth value has as yet been said: "Sit on my finger, sing in my ear, O littleblood."

The problem with all this is that it sounds to an ear not similarly attuned like bad writing—Hughes ends up coming across as a total nihilist. Yet the advantage for the writer lies in the way the social contract—what Hughes refers to as "the clutter of our civilized liberal confusion" ("Popa" 2)—is left unoccupied by any affect, suspended in midair, so to speak, its "defiles"[2] realized as so many alienating detours from an ineffable primal truth, as so many displacements and deferments of what is at stake at the heart of the *I*. Crow's ransacking of history and culture attests to a quest for meaning other than the alienating meanings supported by a social and linguistic order that cannot hold him, an impossible conundrum (as paradoxical as Lacan's parodic reformulation of the Cartesian subject: "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think" [166]). A spanner in the symbolic works, what Crow finally articulates, as his name connotes, is the primacy of what Freud designates as the most instinctual drive, the death drive,[3] a drive which in Kristeva's words "no signifier, no mirror, no other and no mother could ever contain" (*Kristeva Reader* 103).

DEPRESSION: A STYLE

At least theoretically, regression to the mirror stage entails the risk of a collapse into cognitive chaos, even psychosis. Kristeva writes:

> Dreams of borderline patients, schizoid personalities, or those undergoing psychedelic experiments are often 'abstract paintings' or cascades of sounds, intricacies of lines and fabrics, in which the analyst deciphers the dissociation—or a nonintegration—of psychic and somatic unity. Such indices could be interpreted as the ultimate imprint of the death drive . . . the work of death as such, at the zero degree of psychicism, can be spotted precisely in the *dissociation of form* itself, when form is distorted, abstracted, disfigured, hollowed out: ultimate thresholds of inscribable dislocation and jouissance. (*Black Sun* 27)

The disfigured and abstracted language of *Crow* clearly bears some relation to what Kristeva describes here; on the other hand, *Crow*'s "hollowed out" language is not unreadable. It still signifies, even if what

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is signified is felt in the end to be neither here nor there. In this respect, what supports the subject of *Crow* as a subject when all identificatory support is lost is the wave of affect that constitutes *depression* (Freud incidentally designates the melancholy person's superego as a "cultivation of the death drive" [*Black Sun* 17]). According to Kristeva:

> Unlike what happens with psychotics, . . . depressed persons do not forget how to use signs. They keep them, but the signs seem absurd, delayed, ready to be extinguished. . . . As for the discourse of the depressed, it is the 'normal' surface of a psychotic risk: the sadness that overwhelms us, the retardation that paralyzes us are also a shield—sometimes the last one—against madness. (*Black Sun* 47, 42)

Withdrawing from its desiring bonds to the other and to language, it is as if the depressed subject takes refuge in a cushion of mood that breaks a potentially devastating fall through the mirror: Alluding to Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, Kristeva writes of how "Depressive denial . . . affects even the possibilities of a *representation of narcissistic coherence,* hence depriving the subject of its autoerotic exultation, of its 'jubilatory assumption' " (*Black Sun* 49). Following this fall:

> . . . sadness reconstitutes an affective cohesion of the self, which restores its unity within the framework of the affect. The depressive mood constitutes itself as a narcissistic support, negative to be sure, but nevertheless presenting the self with an integrity, nonverbal though it might be. Because of that, the depressive affect makes up for symbolic invalidation and interruption (the depressive's "that's meaningless") and at the same time protects it against proceeding to the suicidal act. (*Black Sun* 19)

A. Alvarez's comment, chosen for the blurb on the book's cover, is in an inadvertent way close to the bone of *Crow:* "Each fresh encounter with despair becomes the occasion for a separate, almost funny, story in which natural forces and creatures, mythic figures, even parts of the body, act out their special roles." That is, the poems function as so many attempts to get a potentially debilitating "encounter with despair" back on the Symbolic move, to fix it in a representation, a move that nonetheless repeatedly falls through itself as the chosen signifier or field of signifiers proves to be too flimsy for the task. However, this is not the same as saying that the poems fail as poems. Almost despite himself, Calvin Bedient notices how a kind of affective meaning is conveyed in the poems through the very *insignificance* of their language: "At this stage of case-hardened disillusion, so Hughes seems to say,

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words will all taste the same anyhow. The very indifference of the language is thus expressive" (114).

What linguistics and literary theory teach us about the arbitrary nature of language is in a sense glaringly obvious to the depressed subject, a subject who is positioned through what Kristeva terms "the denial of negation":

> Listen again for a few moments to depressive speech, repetitive, monotonous, or empty of meaning, inaudible even for the speaker before he or she sinks into mutism. You will note that, with melancholy persons, meaning appears to be arbitrary, or else it is elaborated with the help of much knowledge and will to mastery, but seems secondary, frozen, somewhat removed from the head and body of the person who is speaking. Or else it is from the very beginning evasive, uncertain, deficient, quasi mutistic: 'one' speaks to you already convinced that the words are wrong and therefore 'one' speaks carelessly, 'one' speaks without believing in it.
>
> Meaning, however, is arbitrary; linguistics asserts it for all verbal signs and for all discourse. Is not the signifier LAF completely unmotivated with respect to the meaning of 'laugh,' and also, and above all, with respect to the act of laughing, its physical production, its intrapsychic and interreactional value? . . . Now every 'normal' speaker learns to take that artifice seriously, to cathex it or forget it.
>
> Signs are arbitrary because language starts with a *negation* of loss, along with the depression occasioned by mourning. 'I have lost an essential object that happens to be, in the final analysis, my mother,' is what the speaking being seems to be saying. 'But no, I have found her again in signs, or rather since I consent to lose her I have not lost her (that is the negation), I can recover her in language.'
>
> Depressed persons, on the contrary, *disavow the negation:* they cancel it out, suspend it, and nostalgically fall back on the real object (the Thing) of their loss, which is just what they do not manage to lose, to which they remain painfully riveted. The *denial of negation* would thus be the exercise of an impossible mourning, the setting up of a fundamental sadness and an artificial, unbelievable language, cut out of the painful background that is not accessible to any signifier and that intonation alone, intermittently, succeeds in inflecting. (*Black Sun* 43–44)

What Hughes refers to in a typically esoteric manner as Crow's bride ("What Crow is grappling with is . . . what becomes—at the end of his mistakes and errantry—his bride and his almost-humanity" ["Images" 114]) is less an object of desire than the depressive's unsignifiable

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Thing, the very "seat of the sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated" (*Black Sun* 13). It is this Thing that Crow tries to recover in signs. It is the "soul" of "Two Legends," "the huge stammer / Of the cry that, swelling, could not / Pronounce its sun." It is the "egg of blackness" of the same poem from which Crow is hatched into "emptiness"—the lack-ridden language of the poems—much as the object of desire separates itself from the seat of the Thing (Kristeva). Yet Crow is no object of desire, only a provisional device for trying to establish such an object, a quest in which, shackled as he is to his Thing, Crow stumbles, fails, falls to pieces. The poems in this sense are no more than varyingly "unsuccessful" attempts to translate this unnameable affect that Crow represents.

However, simply to point out that *Crow* is about depression would be as banal as pronouncing Hughes a nihilist, and the point would not be worth mentioning were it not for the light that a psychoanalytic understanding of depression is able to throw on to the problematic question of the book's style and technique. In short, to comprehend the de-alienating mechanics of depressive withdrawal is to grasp the meaning of *Crow*. Kristeva writes of how

> The surge of affect and primary semiotic processes comes into conflict, in depressive persons, with the linguistic armor (which I have called alien or 'secondary'), as well as with symbolic constructs (apprenticeships, ideologies, beliefs). (*Black Sun* 64–65)

When words come with life insurance policies for Crow, he feigns dead, and so on. What Lacan calls "the armour of an alienating identity" here has no hold, it is "shed." In Kristeva's words, "translation—our fate as speaking beings"—has here stopped "its vertiginous course toward metalanguages or foreign languages, which are like many sign systems distant from the site of pain" (*Black Sun* 42). This is the same point that Lacan makes when he warns of the "credulity" to which the subject who does not regress is prone to. It is this regressive stage where Crow walks and muses in the poem "A Disaster," where earth's people are "All digested inside the word." Similarly, in "The Battle of Osfrontalis," words have taken "the whole world with them— / But the world did not notice." Cipher of an "inalienable, inseparable, and for that very reason, unnameable" affect (*Black Sun* 240), Crow remains word-resistant, although he *does* notice what words can do; it is thus to his Thing that Crow owes his metaphysical lucidity. Kristeva writes:

> . . . the sequence of linguistic representations, dissociated as it might be from drive-related and affective representatives, can

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> assume with depressed persons considerable associative originality. . . . The psychomotor retardation of depressive persons may be accompanied, contrary to appearances of passivity, by an accelerated, creative cognitive process—witness the studies bearing on the very singular and inventive associations made by depressed persons starting from word lists submitted to them. Such hyperactivity with signifiers reveals itself particularly by connecting distant semantic fields and recalls the puns of hypomaniacs. It is coextensive with the cognitive hyperlucidity of depressed persons, but also with the manic-depressive's inability to decide or choose.
>
> . . . certain forms of depression are bouts of associative accelerations that destabilize the subject and afford it an escape route away from confrontation with a stable signification or a steady object. (*Black Sun* 59)

The flat, carnivalistic jumble of incongruous discourses in *Crow* constitutes just such an escape route from a social and cultural system that is felt to be unable to contain the self.

Still, it does not follow that the poems in *Crow* are meaningless, only that the language of the poems, its referential function displaced, must be taken as an object of representation in itself before its meaning as such can be heard. "Crow's Account of the Battle" refers the reader less to any battle than to the available means of representing and responding to the event. The cascade of phrases and clichés that have here become dislocated from their semantic fields—science, children's fiction, the cartoon strip, and, in particular, the television or newspaper report—registers the traumatic (in the sense of *intractable*) nature of the site of pain:

> The cartridges were banging off, as planned,
> The fingers were keeping things going
> According to excitement and orders.
> The unhurt eyes were full of deadliness.
> The bullets pursued their courses
> Through clods of stone, earth and skin,
> Through intestines, pocket-books, brains, hair, teeth
> According to Universal laws.
> And mouths cried 'Mama'
> From sudden traps of calculus,
> Theorems wrenched men in two,
> Shock-severed eyes watched blood
> Squandering as from a drain-pipe
> Into the blanks between stars. ("Crow's Account of the Battle")

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Referring to the emergence of "the gas chambers, the atomic bomb, [and] the gulag" in the Second World War, Kristeva writes:

> What those monstrous and painful sights do damage to are our systems of perception and representation. As if overtaxed or destroyed by too powerful a breaker, our symbolic means find themselves hollowed out, nearly wiped out, paralyzed. (*Black Sun* 223)

If a poem like "Crow's Account of the Battle" can be said to bear meaning, it is a meaning that opens not onto the possibility of signification but is instead generated by a signifying crisis. The arbitrary concatenations here register a traumatized inability to concatenate meaningfully. Kristeva writes:

> The affected rhetoric of literature and even the common rhetoric of everyday speech always seem somewhat festive. How can one speak the truth of pain, if not by holding in check the rhetorical celebration, warping it, making it grate, strain, and limp? (*Black Sun* 223)

The type of awkward, mangled language to be found in *Crow* might be the only authentic way of articulating this pain, a pain that releases the subject into a "deep narcissism, the archaic autosensuality of wounded affects" (*Black Sun* 240).

NOTES

[1] In an interview with Ekbert Faas, Hughes says of the *Crow* poems:

> They were usually something of a shock to write. Mostly they wrote themselves quite rapidly, the story was a sort of machine that assembled them, and several of them that seem ordinary enough now arrived with a sense of having done something . . . tabu. (Faas 18)

[2] Lacan's word. He writes: ". . . desire is an effect in the subject of the condition that is imposed on him by the existence of the discourse, to make his need pass through the defiles of the signifier" (264).

[3] Laplanche and Pontalis define Freud's concept of the death drive thus:

> This instinct is held to represent the fundamental tendency of every living being to return to the inorganic state . . . Freud looks upon these . . . instincts as the instincts *par excellence*, in that they typify the repetitive nature of instinct in general. (97, 98)

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A. R. Ammons's Stevensian Search for a Supreme Fiction in *Sphere*

JOHN ADAMES

> Our own time, and by this I mean the last two or three generations, including our own, can be summed up in a way that brings into unity an immense number of details by saying of it that it is a time in which the search for the supreme truth has been a search in reality or through reality or even a search for some supremely acceptable fiction.
>
> —Wallace Stevens, *Necessary Angel* (*NA*) 173

Ammons claims that Emerson and Whitman are his most immediate "forebears" (Grossvogel 51). Evidence for the validity of this claim is his long-standing search for a poetics capable of accommodating the most inclusive vision of reality. Always striving to assimilate the unassimilated, to keep the one and the many in a balanced perspective, he attempts to rediscover how he himself is part of a completely interconnected universe. Yet this search for an inclusive poetics, which culminates in his long poem *Sphere*, reveals the influence of another major poet. When Ammons in *Sphere* alludes to Wallace Stevens and suggests that "if truth is colorless fictions / need be supreme" (*S* 57),[1] he further defines his preoccupation with inclusiveness as a search for "some supremely acceptable fiction" that will serve as a unifying mythos. This allusion prompts a reading of *Sphere* as Ammons's own notes toward a supreme fiction—a reading that shows that his major preoccupations in this poem have virtually identical counterparts in the poetry of Stevens. Both poets are preoccupied with accommodating the unlimited possibilities of reality, the relationship between the earthly and the celestial, and the idea that the ultimate poetry must be abstract. Such preoccupations pervade Ammons's canon—from his earliest volume,

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Ommateum, to his latest, *Garbage*—but register their strongest signal in *Sphere.* In this volume, they are repeated and modulated in a number of different contexts and combine to create an unmistakably Stevensian poetics, which Ammons assimilates to his own vision.

My discussion will focus on how Ammons's treatment of these preoccupations acknowledges the legacy of Stevens and at the same time points toward a new vision of a supreme fiction. By appropriating the poetry of Stevens to his own poetics, Ammons sees the supreme fiction as revealing our sense of place in a hierarchical universe where the divinely ordering forces of what he calls the "Most High" (*S* 69) are extensions of ourselves. *Sphere,* then, somewhat mitigates Stevens's liminal "war between the mind / And sky" (*Collected Poems* [*CP*] 407). As we find ourselves immersed in Ammons's verbal concatenations stretching from the atom to the highest levels of pure energy, we feel the possibility of a more sustained union between self and world. This is a unifying mythos, which, as I will argue, owes a great debt to Stevens's insistence on writing a poetry of earth. Ammons makes it quite clear that intuitions of the "Most High" begin with a desire "to appreciate the lesser celandine" (*S* 82); and surely Stevens is somewhere behind his suggestion that "wherever the imagined lands it's / likely to brush up against a thorn" (*S* 59).

In the heterocosmic world of *Sphere,* Ammons's continual preoccupation with what he calls his "one many problem" (*S* 4)—the need to assimilate particulars within general patterns—is still his primary motivation for achieving a poetics of supreme accommodation. Ammons avoids imposing any artificial unity on a transformative world by focusing "on process rather than on taxonomy" (Clark 1). Recalling his own "Essay on Poetics," he describes the progression from cell to water to energy to spirit as a movement "through the discrete to the general" (*S* 9), and suggests further that he himself is a part of this progression that inevitably connects him to all other forms of life: "I could not say, then, that the earthworm is not / my radical cousin" (*S* 10). Given this sense of the interconnectedness of all things—how "The unassimilable fact leads us on" (*Selected Poems* [*SP*] 32)—Ammons is wary of the idea of fixed boundaries, for he asks: "at what aural / remove from the actual leaf does light cease to be tree (*S* 25).[2] Ammons, however, is aware that once we rid ourselves of the notion of fixed boundaries, we may go to the opposite extreme of falsely recreating nature's forms as if they had no existence independent of perception:

> one terror mind brings on
> itself is that anything can be made of anything: if there are

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> no boundaries that hold firm, everything can be ground into everything else. (*S* 113)

Ammons would also agree with Stevens that the imagination "is not able to create a totally new nature" (*NA* 74), but in spite of fearing the dissolution of all boundaries, he is not about to seek refuge in viewing the natural world as a map of rigid demarcations. But what else are we to expect from a poet who in canto 32 of *Sphere* recognizes the plenitude of earth and declares that

> it's hard to draw a line, the careful,
> arrogant, arbitrary imposition, the divider that blocks off
> and sets apart, the arising of difference and distinction.

Or consider the same poet who nine years earlier in "Corson's Inlet" tells us that the transitions in the landscape are ultimately illusory and "occur over a wider range / than mental lines can keep" (*SP* 44).

Ammons's unwillingness to impose arbitrary divisions on a mutable world may remind us of Stevens, who in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" is also searching for a poetics of supreme accommodation, a poetics based on discovery rather than imposition:

> But to impose is not
> To discover. To discover an order as of
> A season, to discover summer and know it,
>
> To discover winter and know it well, to find,
> Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all,
> Out of nothing to have come on major weather. (*CP* 403–04)

To come upon "major weather," which is one of the supreme fictions, is to perceive that reality is not only beyond the limits of any arbitrary system, but also that it exists as a form of potential for us to discover through experience (Doggett 110). Bonnie Costello has recently argued that our supreme fictions "learn their changes less from autonomous compositional laws than from physical surroundings (216).[3] Similarly, in canto vii of "It Must Be Abstract," Stevens argues that we must allow the world to reveal itself to us, and that sudden, intuitive moments of transformation arise not from balances "That we achieve but balances that happen" (*CP* 386). The poet, then, must consider what Stevens calls "incalculable balances," or what Ammons in an earlier poem such as "One:Many" calls "the inevitable balances events will take" (*SP* 40). A few years later in *Sphere*, he argues that "balancing imbalances / [is] the effect of most narrative" (*S* 90). To misunderstand this paradox—the need for an order inclusive enough

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to accommodate disorder—may be to misunderstand why the artist needs "the widest opening to chance and / possibility" (*S* 16–17). Such a paradox also looks back to "Corson's Inlet," where "thousands of tree swallows / gathering together for flight" represent "an order held / in constant change" (*SP* 45), and forward to Ammons's most recent volume, *Garbage*, where he wants "clarity to be a smooth long bend / disallowing no complexity" (93).

Still, Ammons's strongest plea in *Sphere* for the most open-ended poetic form is centered on the idea of nothingness as the primary condition of ultimate possibility—an idea articulated throughout his canon.[4] In *Sphere* he argues from the outset that "nothingness's complete possibility" (*S* 5) is the only wellspring capable of sustaining his vision of a universe where unity and diversity are compatible forces. Moreover, the idea of nothingness as a source of possibility is repeated at several points in the poem, especially when Ammons is concerned that we may limit our vision of reality. Fearing our capacity to ignore the potential of earth by becoming enslaved to powers we perceive to be greater than ourselves, he says in canto 50 that

> if we must be swayed by the forces
> then at least let's be the only personalities around, the
> sort of greatness a raft in a rapids is and at the top
>
> let's put nothingness, good old: the most open suasion.

The range of nothingness, then, is by extension the unlimited range of the imagination. Moreover, Ammons argues in canto 108 that since the imagination is only shaped by its *memory* of shapes (unlike the body which *is* a shape), it can dwell in nothingness. In other words, because the idea of memory itself may be imagined (and therefore, reimagined), memory is always beyond the limits of whatever images it retains at any particular time: its unrestricted possibilities constitute an infinite potential like that of nothingness:

> if
> nothing shaped stays and shapelessness is dwellingless, where
>
> can we dwell: as shapes (bodies) we dwell only in the flow
> of shapes, turning the arcs of mortality: but the imagination,
> though bodiless, is shaped (being the memory or imagined
>
> memory of shapes) and so can dwell in nothingness.[5]

In *Sphere*, the idea of nothingness often serves the same purpose as the "first idea" does throughout the poetry of Wallace Stevens. But this statement obviously needs qualification. Even though Stevens's "first

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idea is an imagined thing" (*CP* 387), like the sun detroped of all its fictions, it is also a way of seeing. It is this more conceptual understanding of the "first idea" I am comparing to Ammons's use of nothingness. When Ammons looks toward nothingness as a state completely devoid of any preconceived conception of reality, he is trying to see the world again with an innocent eye, which in Stevens's terms is to become a thinker of the "first idea": "If you take the varnish and dirt of generations off a picture, you see it in its first idea. If you think about the world without its varnish and dirt, you are a thinker of the first idea" (*Letters of Wallace Stevens [LWS]* 427). This comparison between Ammons's use of nothingness and Stevens's "first idea" can be further supported by considering how these two states are sometimes related in the poetry of Stevens—particularly in "A Primitive Like an Orb":

> That's it. The lover writes, the believer hears,
> The poet mumbles and the painter sees,
> Each one, his fated eccentricity,
> As a part, but part, but tenacious particle,
> Of the skeleton of the ether, the total
> Of letters, prophecies, perceptions, clods
> Of color, the giant of nothingness, each one
> And the giant ever changing, living in change. (*CP* 443)

This "giant of nothingness" is a personification of the "poetic intelligence" of man (Doggett 101),[6] which in turn is the supreme fiction in all its infinite potential. Here "nothingness" is generative and, like Stevens's concept of the "first idea," allows for an endless reinvention of reality.[7] This "giant of nothingness" has its counterpart in Ammons's "most open suasion" (*S* 50), which, as we have seen, is also equated with nothingness. Indeed, we might say that *Sphere* itself is this "giant ever changing, living in change." It too makes us feel "As if the central poem became the world, / And the world the central poem" (*CP* 441).

In *Sphere*, this emphasis on accommodating the potential of earth is balanced by an equal emphasis on avoiding the perception of heaven as a paradisal realm severed from the natural world. Ammons frequently states that the earth is our only refuge because our search in the skies for an order beyond human limits has led to greater spiritual isolation. In canto 20, he tells us that

> (with our heads in the harmonious skies) we became unsettled by locating vaster centers but made a rescue by bringing our heads down to a geocentric identity with the earth.[8]

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When this search for an omniscient power leads to the creation of gods, the implications are even more pernicious: "what you / made to be greater than you is and enslaves you" (*S* 49). Ammons also questions our dismissal of the earth's riches. In canto 93, he asks: "does He forgive us, does he accept our celebration, when we turn / away from the fruits given and hunger after Him."[9]

Ammons implies that if the earth is our source of refuge, it is also our source of paradise. This I think leads us back to Stevens's "Sunday Morning," where we are asked if the woman who feels "The need of some imperishable bliss" might not find paradise within the earth:

> Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
> In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
> In any balm or beauty of the earth,
> Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven? (*CP* 67)

Yet it becomes apparent that Ammons's secularized presentation of this earth/heaven conflict represents a significant departure from Stevens, whose vision of an earthly paradise in other parts of "Sunday Morning" is more equivocal and paradoxical because of his acute awareness of the void left by the death of the Christian mythos (Vendler, *On Extended Wings* 55). In the poem's concluding stanza, for example, we hear a voice coming over the water that tells of an unresurrected Christ who no longer inspires us with the promise of eternal life:

> The tomb in Palestine
> Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
> It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay. (*CP* 70)

Moreover, this diminishment of the Christian mythos is not suddenly replaced by a new religion of earth. On the contrary, "We live in an old chaos of the sun" (*CP* 70), and are left facing the expansive reach of sea, land, and sky. No shaping spirit guides our "unsponsored" freedom (Bloom 35) as we look out over the "wide water, inescapable" (*CP* 70), and any possibilities of an earthly paradise only emerge paradoxically. The pigeons' wings in their dark descent stretch forth—"a movement that is downward to shadow but also outward" (Cook 110):

> And, in the isolation of the sky,
> At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
> Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
> Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

This vision of an earthly paradise is obviously more muted and restrained than Ammons's vision of earth in *Sphere* as a place where the gods "will return, quick / appearances in the material, and shine our

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eyes blind with adoration" (*S* 86). Ammons appears to be more distanced from Stevens's view of how the annihilation of the gods "left us feeling that in a measure, we, too, had been annihilated" (*Opus Posthumous* [*OP*] 207). Indeed, in *Sphere* we never have the sense that the gods have departed from us permanently. Rather, Ammons in canto 87 suggests that

> the gods have come and gone
> (or we have made them come and go) so long among us that
> they have communicated something of the sky to us making us
>
> feel that at the division of the roads our true way, too,
> is to the sky where with unborn gods we may know no
> further death and need no further visitations.

This union of the human and the divine is also reinforced by Ammons's suggestion that these intimations of divine forces are extensions of ourselves. In canto 69, he asks:

> what is to be done, what is saving: is it so to come to know
> the works of the Most High as to assent to them and be reconciled
> by them, so to hold those works in our imaginations as to think
>
> them our correspondent invention, our best design within the
> governing possibilities.

Having come to Ammons's speculations on divinity as an extended form of the self, I now turn to similar speculations in Stevens's "Notes," and then compare how both poets attempt to resolve this question that no poet who imagines the possibility of a supreme fiction can avoid.

In canto viii of "It Must Give Pleasure," Stevens, like Ammons, suggests that what we imagine to be divine is to be found within ourselves: "Am I that imagine this angel less satisfied? / Are the wings his, the lapis-haunted air? / Is it he or is it I that experience this?" (*CP* 404). All of these questions ask us to believe that "majesty is a mirror of the self," and culminate in the "Jehovah-like assertion" (Vendler, *On Extended Wings* 200) "I have not but I am and as I am, I am" (*CP* 405). Yet the ending of this canto suddenly demands that we revaluate the implications of divinity as an extension of self:

> These external regions, what do we fill them with
> Except reflections, the escapades of death,
> Cinderella fulfilling herself beneath the roof?

In these "external regions," we once again see "reflections" of our own death rather than an extension of our mortality into immortality. Thus, even though Stevens achieves such a supreme integration of the human and the celestial, he still reminds us of the ceaseless "war between the

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mind / And sky" (*CP* 407). Furthermore, Stevens's retreat from his own supreme fiction of the "divinating self" back into a subject/object dichotomy of self and world is in effect "a total surrender of what Emerson and Whitman had fought to preserve, the fiction of a Transcendental consciousness in which the ontological and empirical selves could fuse together" (Bloom 215).

If Stevens's quest in this canto to locate the source of divinity within the self ends by undoing its own fusion of "the ontological and empirical," Ammons's similar quest in canto 69 points to precisely what, according to Bloom, Stevens at this point is surrendering. In other words, Ammons's suggestion in 69 that the source of divinity may be found within the self is extended outward in canto 70 toward an Emersonian union of mind and nature wherein we receive intuitive knowledge of the "Most High." And in spite of telling us that he is terrified by his own arrogance, he still asks:

> can we, accepting
> our smallness, bend to cherish the greatness that rolls through our sharp days, that spends us on its measureless currents: and so, for a moment, if only for a moment, participate in those means
> that provide the brief bloom in the eternal presence.

Thus while Stevens reminds us in canto viii of "It Must Give Pleasure" that "these external regions" are no different from the "dividing and indifferent blue" he failed to meliorate in "Sunday Morning," Ammons continues to focus our attention on the integrated phenomena of the natural world where "all movements are religious" (*S* 52) and "prayer is the working in the currents" (*S* 52). He states that the source of our "religious impulse" (Sitter 208) stems from our need to believe that everything has its place in the hierarchy of creation.[10] Yet Ammons reminds us that we are free to observe how all things are part of a vast, interconnected hierarchy leading up to the "Most High" only if we resist the urge to order the chaos of reality within fixed limits and immovable boundaries. Once again, he emphasizes the need to develop a fiction of supreme accommodation. At this point, however, we might ask, what form will such a fiction take, or as Ammons himself asks: "what is the measure to accommodate the diverse impressions, moods, intuitions" (*S* 107)?

Clearly, then, we should look to the verse of *Sphere* itself, which is perhaps best defined against similar prosodic structures in the poetry of Stevens. Both poets, for example, divide their major long poems into

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cantos composed of tercets, but the punctuation style and meter are different. In *Sphere*, Ammons writes in loose hexameters, and individual lines range from 12 to 19 syllables. His interlinking colons combine every stanza into a continuous whole, the only period in the poem coming at the end of the last canto. This is substantially different from the verse of Stevens's "Notes," or, for that matter, "The Auroras of Autumn" and "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," all of which are written in a loose pentameter, with individual lines usually consisting of 10 or 11 syllables. By contrast, Ammons's colons keep the verse moving forward at all times, while Stevens's more complex punctuation creates a greater multiplicity of meaning that inevitably slows the verse down. In short, we might say that Ammons's "closeless structure is the contrary of Stevens's elaborately organized periods" (Pinsky 155). Of course, the longer hexameter lines of *Sphere* only further underscore Ammons's desire to create a verse form that will act like a loosely woven net capable of sifting and sorting the unending stream of "natural phenomena" (*S* 45):

> this measure, maw, can grind
> up cancers and flourish scarfs of dandelions, manage the
> pulp of hung ticks and be the log the stream flows against
>
> for a whole year; its mesh can widen to let everything
> breeze through except the invisible. (*S* 41)

Furthermore, Ammons shows a strong predilection for abstract poetry—a predilection he is not unwilling to defend:

> I can't understand my readers:
> they complain of my abstractions as if the United States of America
> were a form of vanity: they ask why I'm so big on the
>
> one:many problem. (*S* 122)

Abstraction, for Ammons, suggests the greatest possible inclusivity—an attitude virtually opposite to the constricting limitations of vanity. He wants the abstract poem to allow for assimilation, openness, and optimism:

> its hard to tell what an abstract poet wants: my hopes
>
> are for a context in which the rosy can keep its edges out of
> frost: my hopes are for a broad sanction that gives range
> to life, for the shining image of nothingness within which
>
> schools of images can swim contained and askelter. (*S* 132)

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Ammons is also not simply favoring abstract poetry over concrete poetry.[11] Rather, he compares himself to Whitman and claims to be "the exact / poet of the concrete *par excellence*" (*S* 123). As a poet who has "prized / multeity and difference down to the mold under the leaf" (*S* 123), Ammons hopes to accommodate all that the eye can see. He "offers a mobile universe of which wholeness is an abstract condition, a beginning rather than a closure" (Wolfe 82). In short, he sees the abstract poem as a vehicle of supreme integration:

> the abstract poem
> cleaves through the glassy heights like the hump of a great
> beast, the rising reification, integration's grandest, most
> roving whale: in this way Enlil became a god and ruled
> the sky: in this way earth became our mother: in this way
> angels shaped light. (*S* 136–37)

Just as the Assyro-Babylonian god Enlil is an integration of several beliefs, the abstract poem is a highly ordered integration of the great abundance of reality. This comparison, however, between the abstract poem and the image of a god may well have been influenced by Stevens. Stevens states that "the fictive abstract is as immanent in the mind of the poet, as the idea of God is immanent in the mind of the theologian" (*LWS* 434). As Frye argues, Stevens's supreme fiction "is abstract for the same reason that a god is not reducible to its image" (287). Thus, none of Stevens's major abstractions is reducible to any single definition. For example, in "Notes" I:x, Stevens says that "major man is . . . abler / In the abstract than in his singular" (*CP* 388) because he "is an extension of man, the leaner being, in fiction, a possibly more than human human, a composite human" (*LWS* 434).

Although both poets see abstract poetry as a vehicle for accommodating the unlimited potential of reality, Ammons, unlike Stevens, emphasizes the relationship between inclusiveness and abstraction within a highly discursive context. When Ammons tells us that "the abstract poem, yearning / into the lean-away, acquires a skeleton to keep it here" (*S* 136), it is apparent that this skeleton is none other than the discursive, rambling verse of *Sphere*. That this verse is to allow for the greatest possible inclusiveness is evident from Ammons's suggestion that within the abstract poem we are to seek

> the whole measure that is ease
> and ramble around without constriction or distortion
> (debilitating exclusion) until the big sky opens the freedom
> between design and designed airiness. (*S* 137)

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Of course, this is precisely how we ramble around in *Sphere*, with every interlinking colon providing an easy passageway in a continuum of particulars:

> the visible
> resides within the invisible: the coherent within the
> incoherent: the discontinuous, the discrete, occurs within
>
> the continuous: the visible, coherent, discrete dwell
> in flotation which faces out on the illimitable. (*S* 137)

Stevens, on the other hand, illustrates the relationship between inclusiveness and abstraction primarily in figurative terms. The potential of "major man" is not presented to us discursively but instead is revealed in the suggestiveness of metaphor. Similarly, "major weather" is equally suggestive and, like "major man," has its source in the phenomenal world. Stevens also emphasizes that his abstractions imply an interdependence between reality and the imagination. Unlike Ammons, who suggests that within the "skeleton" of the abstract poem we can actually see how the "visible resides within the invisible," Stevens argues in "Notes" I:vi that since the invisible abstraction is a metaphorical extension of visible reality, the two are actually more equivalent:

> It must be visible or invisible
> Invisible or visible or both:
> A seeing and unseeing in the eye.
>
> The weather and the giant of the weather,
> Say the weather, the mere weather, the mere air:
> An abstraction blooded, as a man by thought. (*CP* 385)

To move from the "giant of the weather" to "mere weather" results in a "constant reference from the abstract to the real" (*LWS* 434), a movement that parallels the shift from the invisible to the visible. In effect, source (the "mere weather" we can actually see) and abstracted extension (the "giant of the weather" we hold in the mind as a fiction) are absolutely interdependent.

This consideration of both poets' use of abstraction completes my discussion of the preoccupations that prompt a reading of *Sphere* as Ammons's own notes toward a supreme fiction. It remains only to bring into sharper focus Ammons's view of a supreme fiction as unifying mythos. In *Sphere* he incorporates a plethora of Stevensian preoccupations. He is suspicious of boundaries and forced balances; he desires to see reality as a clean slate freed from the limitations placed on it by any system or belief; he is fearful of letting "lofty identifications" (*S* 33)

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replace our sense of earth, fearful of undermining human potential by creating gods more powerful than ourselves; and he looks to abstract poetry as a vehicle of inclusiveness. Furthermore, we might expect that any poet with these preoccupations would become, like Stevens, a poet of thresholds who continually "constructs and de-constructs the relationship between imagination and reality" (Giamo 41). But this is not the case. Stevens is always wary that his own supreme fictions may impose limits on our view of reality in much the same way as the older fictions he is constantly decreating. Ammons, however, is a poet of the continuum who implies that his own "massive suasions" (*S* 108) do not impose artificial restrictions on the unlimited possibilities of reality. He claims, for instance, that within the motions of the poem, these "suasions" mirror an order in which

> the coincidental, peripheral event, the simple, minute particular leads to something inevitable; that is, you see some peripheral connection leading to something more central, becoming more binding until the poem completes itself in an inevitable place. ("Event: Corrective Cure" 215)

For Ammons, the idea of a "suasion" is also inseparable from his view of *Sphere* as "The Form of a Motion" (the subtitle of the poem). When a poem's form imitates the flux of reality—"a temporary 'holding' of motion" (Schneider 209)—we experience an instance of an order that permeates the whole universe.[12] Moreover, Ammons, as I have mentioned earlier, tells us that "all movements are religious" (*S* 52) and that "prayer is the working in the currents" (*S* 52). Consequently, to become "responsive to and in harmony with the body of motions" is to become a part of that prayer, part of the logos. In this sense, then, the poem "heals the division in ourselves between thing and word" (Ammons, "Event: Corrective Cure" 215) and momentarily brings about a complete union between self and world, as we are

> brought through organized motion from chaos and ephemerality to no-motion: to touch the knowledge that motions are instances of order and direction occurring
>
> briefly in the stillness tha t surrounds: to touch, to know,
> to be measured and criticized by the silence, to acknowledge
> and surrender to wholeness and composure. (*S* 68)

The measure of the poem becomes the measure of the earth: there is no simple division between "the flux of reality . . . and the artificial forms of the mind" (Hans 89).

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At the end of *Sphere*, these "instances of order" are expanded to universal proportions, and Ammons views the world as if it were one "massive suasion," one gigantic poem that allows for

> united differences, surface differences expressing the common,
> underlying hope and fate of each person and people, a
> gathering
> into one place of multiple dissimilarity, each culture to its
> own cloth and style and tongue and gait, each culture, like
> the earth itself with commonlode center and variable surface,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> a united, capable poem, a united, capable mind, a united
> capable
> nation, and a united nations! capable, flexible, yielding,
> accommodating, seeking the good of all in the good of each.
> (*S* 153–54)

Here is the poem's final plea for a unified vision of unlimited possibility. Here is the final spilling out of all that poetry is to accomplish. Here is the potential contained metaphorically in Stevens's "giant" let loose in the discursive rhythms of Ammons's *Sphere*. Nothing is held back. Stevens's vision of "A larger poem for a larger audience" (*CP* 465), his vision of a "festival sphere" (*CP* 466), is continued in a worthy successor, whose new vision of a supreme fiction in *Sphere* continues the search for a unifying mythos—a mythos wherein we may take heed of the star who says to Ammons, and indeed to all of us,

> let go and let your humanity rise to its natural
>
> height . . . and you will in that smallness be as
> great as I. (*S* 111)

NOTES

[1] All references to *Sphere* are cited parenthetically as *S*, followed by the number of the canto.

[2] These remarks cautioning the reader about imposing boundaries are anticipated in *Tape for the Turn of the Year*. See pages 99, 181, and particularly 116, where he urges: don't establish the / boundaries / first . . . of preconceived / possibility."

[3] See also Helen Vendler, who argues that "What we see and experience as the earth *is* the Supreme Fiction" ("'Notes'" 159).

[4] The following quotations are but a few selected examples: "through the forms of nothingness . . . the seed safety of multiple origins" ("In the Wind My Rescue Is," *SP* 5); "the most perfect nothingness affords / the widest play"

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("Summer Session," *Selected Longer Poems* [*SLP*] 18); "nothingness . . . is really the point of lovely liberation" ("Hibernaculum," *SLP* 96); "the gain of unity . . . the continuum of nothingness" (*Tape for the Turn of the Year* 23); "nothingness's wide amplitude" ("On Being," *Lake Effect Country* 20); "the nothingness of all the poised / somethings" (*Garbage* 27).

[5] Other references in *Sphere* to the amplitude of nothingness include "the uterus of nothingness" (*S* 131) that surrounds the continuum at its most distant periphery; his hope as an abstract poet for "the shining image of nothingness within which / schools of images can swim contained and askelter" (*S* 132); and near the end of the poem, the image of our universe as a great open sea that "forever folds back into a further motion of itself: the plenitude of nothingness" (*S* 150).

[6] See also Harold Bloom, who argues that "it is poetic language itself that is ultimately 'the giant of nothingness,' and the 'First Idea of the sun' or Whitmanian giant is not nature but language" (295).

[7] Other examples suggesting a similar kind of generative nothingness in Stevens's poetry appear in "The Rock": "As if nothingness contained a metier" (*CP* 526); "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven": "In things seen and unseen, created from nothingness" (*CP* 486); "Prologues to What Is Possible": "The way the earliest single light in the evening sky, in spring, / Creates a fresh universe out of nothingness" (*CP* 517); "The Sail of Ulysses": "For this creator is a lamp . . . the shine / Of darkness, creating from nothingness" (*Palm* 389). Some of my observations on nothingness as a "generative" force in the poetry of Stevens have been anticipated by Joseph Caroll (96, 180, 315–16).

[8] Several lyrics in Ammons's canon also express the idea of earth as source of our divinity. For example, see the speaker's insistence on earth as an ultimate source of "radiance" in "Wiring" (*A Coast of Trees* 39); the argument that those who reach toward a higher realm cannot escape their earthly identifications in "Breaking Out" (*A Coast of Trees* 32); and the futility of those who diminish the potential of the world in order to set themselves up above it in "Theories of Height" (*Lake Effect Country* 6).

[9] Donald H. Reiman argues conversely that "aspirations toward the supermortal" in *Sphere* imply a "separation" between Man and his natural environment (38). Yet there is more than ample evidence for the alternative reading that I present—one that maintains that Ammons does not at all forsake the quotidian world in his contemplation of powers higher than ourselves. See my discussion that follows.

[10] In an interview with Cynthia Haythe, Ammons explains his sense of a hierarchy:

> We need . . . [to] have an adequate system that will answer us spiritually and physically in a real way. That's all I mean about hierarchy. The human mind cannot get away from that, as far as I'm concerned . . . the idea that we do stack our values one way or another. And even more fundamental, we cannot handle all the million bits of information that we receive every day except by subgrouping them under controlling suborders and symbols. . . . I'll never forget that letter of Stevens when he's writing to somebody overseas and says "and get me one of those little wooden Buddhas about six inches high. And every morning when I wake up, it will do me good!" ("Interview" 188–89)

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[11] Stevens is also concerned that his preference for abstraction does not preclude the concrete. He says, for example, that "in order to avoid abstractness, in writing, I search out instinctively things that express the abstract and yet are not in themselves abstractions" (*LWS* 290).

[12] This view of poetry as the form of a motion capable of containing the vast plenitude of the world continues to preoccupy Ammons, particularly in his latest volume, *Garbage*. For example, he calls for "a curvature like the arising of a spherical section" where all is "assimilated to an arch of silence, an interrelation / permitting motion in stillness" (92). See also pp. 25, 55, and 118.

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Some Interviews with E. M. Forster, 1957–58, 1965

WILFRED STONE

In 1957–58 and again in 1965 I had a number of interviews with E. M. Forster in the course of writing a book on him. At the time, I entertained no idea of publishing them, partly because I was busy with the book, partly because I didn't think they were worth it, but mostly because, in that same period (and before), some fifteen interviews with Forster had been published[1] and I had no desire to add to that overload. But on reading my notes today, some 40 years after the event, they seem on balance worth saving from the wastebasket.

Unlike, say, Angus Wilson,[2] I had no amanuensis to take notes while I asked questions—and Forster specifically banned tape recorders (which anyway I didn't possess). So my record consists of notes written down immediately after the interviews, as verbatim as I could make them—except occasionally when I just noted the gist. I was never at ease during these sessions (though Forster was kindness itself) since, in a word, I was ill-prepared for them. In the preceding months, family obligations, a heavy teaching load, complications of an ocean voyage, and the now-or-never constraints of a sabbatical fellowship all conspired to deliver me into Forster's presence before I had even had time to reread his novels. If many of my questions seem to deal with biography, Bloomsbury, and other nonfictional matters, that is the reason.

But here are my notes, for what they are worth.

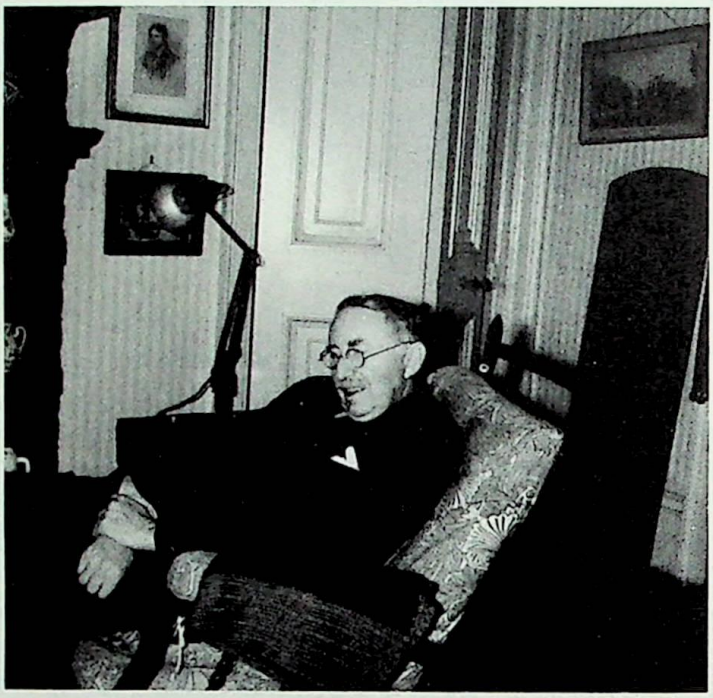
OCTOBER 23, 1957, 6:00–7:00 p.m.

I begin by noting my own nervousness, followed by a description of Forster's rooms in King's College Cambridge (where all the interviews

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took place) and of his appearance and manner. Since the first issue has no literary importance and the others are covered in a hundred other accounts, I shall let the accompanying photograph (taken March 1958 and hitherto unpublished) stand for many words and cut directly to the interview itself.



WS This is a lovely room.

EMF Yes, isn't it? [Silence]

EMF [Breaking the ice] Well, how is your work coming? [Forster had agreed to talk to me on the understanding that I would undertake a work of literary criticism and not a critical biography (like my earlier book on Mark Rutherford[3] which Forster had read). Basil Willey, who had reviewed the Mark Rutherford book, had helped introduce me to Forster.]

WS It's just now getting under way. I've been tied up with other things through the summer and am only now beginning to shape my thoughts.

EMF Have you seen this book? [He showed me a book by D. J. Enright containing a chapter on himself and Virginia Woolf.[4] He

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offered to lend it to me, but I declined, since he was just now reading it himself. From here on, in a rather hit-or-miss way, I consulted my prepared questions.]

WS Do you think your own writing method has anything in common with Virginia Woolf's "tunneling process"? [This referred to a term VW uses in *A Writer's Diary*, edited by Leonard Woolf, but EMF apparently was not familiar with it, since he interpreted *tunneling process* in his own way.]

EMF I never took writing so seriously as Virginia. She was always transmuting all experiences into writing. She was always tunneling. For me writing was never that kind of full-time job.

WS In your writing, did you begin with an idea, a character, a situation—or how were your books conceived?

EMF I think with an idea.

WS In your essay on Virginia Woolf, you remark that she was not indifferent to criticism. Her diaries, published by Leonard Woolf, indicate a woman extremely sensitive to criticism.

EMF Yes, isn't that extraordinary? I was surprised to read that remark about her being furious with me in front of the London Library. I was only trying to be amusing.[5]

WS She had a sharp tongue—reminds one a little of Jane Carlyle.

EMF Yes indeed—a very good comparison.

WS I suppose the full diaries will contain a good many surprises. I wonder if they will be published?

EMF Yes, I should think they would. Leonard has them all, I believe.

WS I have been reading Roger Fry's *Transformations* lately and have been struck by parallels between his aesthetic theory and your precept and practice. The emphasis on "plastic" or "intrinsic" values as opposed to representational or "psychological" values (as Mauron uses the term)[6] struck me as similar to your emphasis in *Aspects* on rhythm and pattern, and so forth, as opposed to story.

EMF Oh, yes?

WS Yes. Also, in "Art for Art's Sake" and "Anonymity," I noted a similar emphasis—that the real artistic achievement is *anonymous*, that beyond the author and his worldly identity there is the *art*,

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which is an organic whole with an intrinsic, not extrinsic, value. [This was, I thought, at base a good question (and embodied ideas I later used in chapter 5 of *The Cave and the Mountain)*, but I was aware of expressing it badly, and I had a feeling that EMF was getting bored, which panicked me a little. I thought I'd better ask shorter questions, lest I stop the conversation.]

WS Do you think these observations are correct? Were you conscious of following Fry in any way?

EMF Quite possibly they're true. No, I wasn't conscious of following him. I knew Roger very well, of course. He used to laugh at me for always wanting to look at the *picture.* I used to joke with him and ask why, if the representation didn't matter, he arranged his lines to look like recognizable people and landscapes. He would answer, "I like them better that way." [Here I felt rather dead-ended. We really hadn't tapped into any single idea beyond the surface. But I resolved to have one other little go at aesthetics.]

WS Do you think music is the greatest of the arts?

EMF Yes.

WS Why? Is it because it is the most abstract?

EMF No, because it best expresses pure feeling.

WS Did you in writing begin from any consciously realized aesthetic theory?

EMF No.

WS [Changing the subject.] I admired your Preface to *Flowers and Elephants* very much.[7] [His face lit up with pleasure.]

EMF Oh, that was so long ago. I've forgotten the book.

WS I wondered if you agreed with her particular form of Platonism. It seemed to me to depend on her remaining in a state of isolation and almost dream—a rigorous detachment from life and love.

EMF I don't remember the book very much. No. I don't think I'm much of a Platonist. [This answer surprised me. I didn't think that was what I was asking.]

WS I've been interested, too, in the closeness of some of your expressed ideas to those advanced by G. E. Moore. Were you much influenced by him?

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EMF Oh, he was a tremendous influence when I was here. He touched R. C. Trevelyan, Roger Fry, J. M. Keynes very deeply. But I was never very good at philosophy. I was always a little on the outside. He is still living in Cambridge, you know.

WS Yes, I learned that the other day.

WS So far as I've gone in my reading, I do detect a family likeness in Moore, Fry, and yourself. Mr. Johnstone has made something of that in his book.[8]

EMF Well, I rather think I was brought in just to fill a gap. I really was outside the Bloomsbury group. I knew and liked them, of course, but I wasn't at the center.

WS So I gather. Keynes makes that point in his memoir.[9] [At this point he asked if I would like some very sweet sherry or gin or dry or sweet vermouth. I took dry vermouth and we resumed talking. He walked with difficulty and explained about his foot: a sprain, appearing from nowhere, had persisted in that foot for over a month. During our conversation he had rested his foot on a stool. I commiserated with him about his ailment, but before the conversation got stuck on that subject (which EMF clearly enjoyed), I remembered to convey the greetings of the Hale-Whites on behalf of their son John.[10] He seemed very pleased and told me (what I already knew) that John as an undergraduate had lived in rooms directly above his and that he was now sculpturing in Italy. We resumed by talking about the various dramatizations of his books. EMF mentioned a radio script of *The Longest Journey* that he didn't seem to think much of. Then he spoke of the dramatization of *A Room with a View.*]

EMF Do you know about that?

WS Yes. [I knew about it but hadn't read or seen it.]

EMF Very good, I think. Hardly any of the dialogue is what appears in the book, I was surprised to discover, yet the play is very like indeed.

WS The coming production of Santha Rama Rau's *A Passage to India* must be an exciting event for you.

EMF Oh yes indeed. It's actually coming on the boards very soon, both in London and on Broadway.

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WS Miss Rau mentioned in that article in *Harper's Bazaar* that of all your books you thought most highly of *The Longest Journey*. Why?

EMF [Here his full answer escapes me, but it included something like: "I put a good deal of myself into it," and "It was a kind of new experiment for me." Then he said: "But the book does seem dated today—there are a lot of things wrong with it."]

WS What, for example? Chapter endings?

EMF No, I rather think those are all right. That operatic break-up scene. It's a bit overdone for modern taste.

WS I noticed the word *real* used often in the book. Such as, "Stephen was never so real to me," etc.

EMF Oh yes, of course; that's the whole point of the book—illusion and reality. Remember that first scene? That is straight out of G. E. Moore.

WS Do you like Stephen Wonham?

EMF Oh yes.

WS Don't you like him and not like him?

EMF Oh, I don't like some of the things on the surface, his rudeness, for example.

WS Isn't Rickie a little prudish in repudiating Stephen for drinking? Well, perhaps *prudish* isn't the word.

EMF We must remember the enormous difference between the manners of that day and this. No, I don't think Rickie is prudish, really. Agnes is the prudish one.

WS Cambridge at the turn of the century must have been an enormously exciting place.

EMF Oh yes indeed. Especially to me, coming up from a dull little school. [At this point EMF began to hunt for pamphlets and a scrapbook containing a miscellany of reviews and undergraduate writing (by himself and others). He also showed me a copy of James McConkey's *The Novels of E. M. Forster*, just published by the Cornell University Press. He then asked if I had seen all of his books and writings I needed. I said no, that I needed to gather a complete bibliography.]

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EMF Oh, it's being done—by Oliver Stallybrass, a former Kingsman, now at the London Library. I will see you get a copy when it's finished.

WS I hope it will be complete, contain everything. [I was here fishing for some hint of the unpublished novel, and other unpublished material, that I had heard—from Noel Annan and others—existed.[11]]

EMF I rather suspect there will be some items left out.

WS Why the long gap between *Howards End* and *Passage*? The war?

EMF Yes, mainly. I had begun a book on Samuel Butler after *Howards End* but the war interrupted it.

WS Will you ever finish it?

EMF Oh, I had thought of doing so many times, but I don't think the interest in Butler is any longer great enough. He's not much read now, is he?

WS I think not. But I've just read *Erewhon* and *Erewhon Revisited*. [I mentioned a professor at Stanford, a New Zealander named Colin Hutton, who had recently made a pilgrimage to the Erewhon Valley.] What was the nature of Butler's influence on you?

EMF Well, I've written all that someplace. I brought Butler into *A Room with a View*. It's his commonplace books[12] and people that really influence you.

WS In your piece appearing some years back in the *New York Times Book Review* entitled "Cocoanut & Co: Entrance to an Abandoned Novel,"[13] editorial mention was made of an unpublished novel. Does such a novel exist? I have heard others speak of it as well. [At this his face clouded a little. He seemed a bit resentful and wondered where I had received the information—but did not press me for an answer.]

EMF Yes, I have such a novel. [At this I dropped the subject, hoping to ask at a later meeting if I might read it. This was, of course, the "homosexual" novel, posthumously published as *Maurice*.]

At this point the discussion began to wind down. He mentioned my Mark Rutherford book, remarking that he did not much like Mark Rutherford (I'd have been surprised if he had!) and commenting that

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he once knew Mabel Marsh and Sophia Partridge, friends of Hale White in his old age. I asked where G. Lowes Dickinson used to live at King's and we spoke briefly of his just-appeared article in the *London Magazine* entitled "De Senectute," dealing with his thoughts on turning 80.[14] He then showed me a book by William Plomer entitled *Museum Pieces* and asked if I'd seen it. I said no and he insisted I borrow it. He asked how long I was staying in England and seemed pleased when I said until May. "You must come and see me again," he said. He took my address, promised to send the Stallybrass bibliography when he received it, and accompanied me to the landing. We shook hands—the softest hands I think I had ever held! I felt somewhat dissatisfied with the interview, since I had stayed fearfully far from the novels, but I was reassured by his warmth and cordiality.

NOVEMBER 6, 1957, ABOUT 5:30–6:00 p.m.

The purpose of this visit was to pick up Oliver Stallybrass's checklist of EMF's works, which EMF had informed me by postcard had arrived. I asked about his foot and EMF replied: "The doctor thinks it is gout but is not quite convinced because it is not painful enough!" I was about to leave when EMF asked me if I had any further questions. I was caught off-guard and came up with some rather old chestnuts.

WS Can you say anything more about Moore's influence?

EMF I got what I got from Moore indirectly. I never had any formal philosophy and don't think I ever read *Principia Ethica.* Most of the Moore I absorbed I got through H. O. Meredith.[15]

WS In reading about Keynes's enthusiastic response to Moore, I wonder if he didn't, consciously or unconsciously, influence most of your Cambridge generation.

EMF Very likely.

WS What Cambridge people influenced you most strongly?

EMF G. L. Dickinson. Also Wedd—who used to occupy these rooms.

WS I am conscious in your writing of a consistent, stable sensibility relatively unchanged from past to present. Can you think of any major fluctuations in feelings or attitudes? [This was a question born of desperation. I think I was cribbing from a comment Elizabeth Bowen had made.][16]

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EMF No. But there were some political changes. I was pro–Boer War for a time and then changed.

WS Gide said he abjured politics because politics was fraught with fraud. Were you apolitical for similar reasons?

EMF No. English politics have less fraud than French. I would say because of their essential futility. It's preposterous to read Gaitskell's answer to Macmillan on the economy on the same page as Sputnik!

WS I was much interested in your letter to Julian Bell before he went off to the Spanish War—and the activist/quietist question generally. I wonder if the ideal of *l'homme engagé* is much in vogue today? I rather think that that kind of heroics doesn't much appeal to today's—postwar—generation, and what you offer is perhaps closer. [I felt on most uncertain ground here!]

EMF Do you think so? I hope so. That's interesting. [Said with serious emphasis.] Is there in the U.S.A. today a cult comparable to the angry young men over here?

WS Perhaps James Dean, the "rebel without a cause"?

EMF I think that youth worship is rather the dominant characteristic there. [With that, things tapered off and I made my way to the door.]

JANUARY 10, 1958, 2:00–3:15 p.m.

I first returned the envelope of pamphlets he had loaned me, the book of newspaper cuttings, and the Stallybrass checklist. In this session I mainly asked prepared questions, but first EMF offered tea and spent a few minutes in preparing it. I remarked that I was glad to see him on his feet again. (He had to walk out the door and across the hall to get water for the tea.) He brought up (Howard Overing) Sturgis. I had mentioned *Belchamber* in a note to him earlier.

EMF No, I don't think I was influenced by him, though there are some similarities between Sainty and Rickie. [He mused over the facts that he read *Belchamber* in 1904 and that *The Longest Journey* didn't appear until 1907, but nothing came of these musings.]

My notes on this meeting show only the gist of EMF's replies to my sometimes lengthy questions. I am therefore amplifying the record sufficiently to make the conversation intelligible.

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WS Was [G. Lowes] Dickinson the editor of, or only a contributor to, *The Independent Review*? [In reply EMF produced a first issue of the journal from which I copied down the names of the editorial board. Edward Jenks was the editor.][17]

WS I can't get over the feeling that *The Longest Journey* ought to have been the first book you wrote. Can you tell me something about when your books were begun and how long you worked on them?

EMF *The Longest Journey* wasn't the first. *A Room with a View* was the first begun, then I laid it aside. I talk about that in *The Hill of Devi*. With *Passage*, I wrote as far as Fielding's tea party in 1912. I took the manuscript with me to India in 1921, but I couldn't write in India.

WS Were you consciously working in a Wellsian (or anti-Wellsian) manner in "The Machine Stops"?

EMF Yes.

WS In 1919 did you have a regular position as drama critic for the *Athenaeum*?

EMF No. I'm surprised to hear that I did much drama criticism.[18]

WS Who is the G. H. L. of the dedication to *Alexandria*?

EMF George Ludolf.

WS Where can I find out something about Syed Ross Masood, to whom you dedicated *Passage*?

EMF I can't think.

WS Who is the L. H. C. S. to whom "Anonymity" (the pamphlet) is dedicated?

EMF Laurence Shuttleworth.

WS Why did you change publishers from Blackwoods to Arnold?

EMF They didn't think I was good enough.

WS Why did you not reprint "Albergo Empedocle" in your story volumes?

EMF I didn't think it was good enough.

WS Was it difficult lecturing to the Working Men's College? Did you feel you had to tailor your remarks to suit an uneducated audience?

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EMF No, not at all. [He mentioned T. S. Eliot's lectures on Dante to a similar audience.]

WS Where does the epigraph ". . . Only connect" come from?

EMF I invented it. I made it up. [Said with a little chuckle.]

WS Do you have a copy of your essay "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions upon National Character"?

EMF No. I think the copy is lost. Buckle probably inspired it.[19]

WS Did Lytton Strachey ever see the piece "Strivings after Historical Style" that you wrote for *Basileona*?[20] Did Strachey influence you in writing such things as "Cardan" and "Voltaire" in *Abinger Harvest*?

EMF No, but my history tutor liked it. "Voltaire" may owe something to Lytton, but not "Cardan." That's too early.

WS Do you know who wrote the anti-jingoist poems in *Basileona*—"The Higher Patriotism" and "The Chosen Race"?

EMF No.

WS To what degree would you say your books are imaginative reconstructions of real places and people? Somewhere you declare that the author is simply a liar, must be, when asked if he puts real people in his books and says yes. Do you reaffirm that statement?

EMF They are reminiscences of real people, not actual portraits.

WS Mr. Stallybrass attributes an article on G. K. Chesterton to you on the basis of style alone. Is this the article? [I have no record of what I showed him, but it was probably EMF's review of *The New Jerusalem* by Chesterton that appeared in the Dec. 4, 1920 *Nation*, pp. 344, 346, under the title "The Untidy Gentleman."]

EMF Yes.

WS What occasioned the libel suit that followed publication of "A Flood in the Office," which was withdrawn from *Abinger Harvest* after initial publication?

EMF The review mentioned a pamphlet in which one Nile engineer attacked another over some technical matter and he was sued in Egypt. The plaintiff won, so the republication of the piece in *Abinger Harvest* became libelous—became automatically "radioactive."[21]

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WS It is tempting to compare your ceasing to write novels and Matthew Arnold's ceasing to write poems after he was about 30, and turning to social criticism. Arnold felt guilty about not being "in the world"—a philistine world he felt he should help to "civilize." Would you say that your leaving off novel-writing had anything in common with this?

EMF Very interesting. No. I don't think so. I don't know. Perhaps the breakdown of the home as it once was has partly caused the split. Of classes too.

WS As you look back on your life, what do you think has been your greatest contribution?

EMF Can't answer.

WS What is the title of the unpublished novel? When was it written?

EMF [Musing] Let's concern ourselves with the published work. There's nothing shocking about the title!

WS Sets of opposites in your work can be multiplied enormously—Sawston vs. Italy, professional vs. amateur, organized vs. muddle, city vs. country, the individual vs. the official, bigness vs. littleness. Am I right in assuming that you are not just posing rights against wrongs, sheep against goats, but reminding us of complexity, of aspects of life that need joining?

EMF In *Howards End* I tried to strike a balance. [EMF expanded on this, but my notes shed no light.]

WS In reading your review of Stella Kramrisch's "The Art of India"—which you entitled "The World Mountain"—I was particularly moved. I felt that here was a metaphor, a symbol, which could serve admirably to explain much of your work. The world mountain—on the outside is all the complexity and mess of human history and society—at the cave-like core is the individual alone with his god, whatever that god may be. The Hindu illustration fits, not because you are essentially Hindu in belief, but because the Hindu illustration is free of dogmatism and allows that freedom of the imagination and spirit you need for your vision of human life—a kind of primal inner and outer, the knowable and the unknowable. Also, there is room (in this image) to *leave* the inner cell and return to the world, not as a final gesture, but repeatedly, out and in, again and again. Is there anything in this picture that strikes you as valid?

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EMF It's a good image, but one could strain it too much.[22] [At that, after a few formalities, we called it a day.]

MAY 14, 1958

I had no questions and answers for this meeting. I came in without a previous engagement and wrote up my memories of the meeting afterward. Forster had not answered a May 1 note I had written him, and since I wanted to return Plomer's *Museum Pieces*, I used this excuse to drop in. A student was there but left presently. Forster was very cordial. I first asked him if he would consider writing an article for *Sequoia*, a Stanford undergraduate literary magazine I had partly fathered, and gave him a copy of the Winter 1958 issue. I told him the editor had asked me to ask EMF to contribute if I knew him well enough by now. He replied, "Well. I should hope you felt you knew me well enough!" I don't recall whether he declined on the spot or not; but nothing of EMF's ever appeared in the magazine.

I asked him if he would identify the people in *The Modern Symposium* by G. Lowes Dickinson. He did and I wrote the names in the front of my book. Then I asked him if there was an original for Mrs. Wilcox or Mrs. Moore. He thought quite a long time and then said, "No, I don't think so."

Then I brought up the name of Charles Mauron. He brightened immediately and said he was glad I'd thought of him. He said he wasn't aware of any influence from Mauron in writing *Aspects*—that it was simply a dedication out of friendship. He said Mauron is mayor of St. Remy in France (I have since learned there are about a dozen St. Remys!), that he was of peasant stock, that he went out to Indo-China as a young man. He combined love of pictures with extreme practical sense. He was now completely blind—a man of about 50 years.

I asked him again for an explanation of why he ceased writing novels after *Passage*. He said the social thing was no longer a feasible subject. I mentioned Jane Austen, and that was what he clearly had in mind. He said he thought the modern world was more the subject for the poet. The immensity of its issues simply didn't allow of easy treatment in the novel. He mentioned reading recently Auden's "Ode on the Death of Freud"—which he thought very great. The novelist just can't do that sort of thing. I said I thought the epic was out today, though. He said he thought the opposite, that the *materials* for epic had never been so present—the immensity of the problems of the world

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were simply staggering—but that he thought the fault was in the absence of an *audience* for epic.

About this time a "lady journalist" (as he called her) came in—with an appointment. She was doing an article on Forster for the next issue of *Varsity*. But we exchanged a few more words.

Would he qualify in any way the critical views he expressed in *Aspects*? Yes, he would revise his opinion of Joyce. "Joyce is not my kind of writer, but I can see I undervalued him."

He had not read Glen O. Allen's article in *PMLA* on *Passage*.

I had to leave before much else was said, but he urged me to see him again before we left.

MARCH 8, 1965

I returned to England for almost three weeks (March 3–March 24) mainly to collect photographic illustrations for *The Cave and the Mountain*, now almost completed. Forster had written to say that he could not send photographs, but that if I could get over there we could have a "rummage" together through his collections. We spent the better part of a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday of one week together, and I came away with copies of some 80 photographs. It was a bonanza, and Forster's generosity was beyond praise. Most of our talk was informal, but on Monday I asked him some prepared questions and jotted down answers in the usual way.

WS I notice that you make frequent references to Matthew Arnold, not only in *Howards End* but in a good many essays. Was he a conscious influence?

EMF Yes, he was a conscious influence.

WS "Nature" is obviously something you love—landscapes, rivers, trees, downs, etc. What kind of a nature-worshipper would you call yourself? How much do you share Wordsworth's sense of "something far more deeply interfused" in the natural environment?

EMF My attitude has changed in the last few years when I see how easily nature can be destroyed. It was once a reverential approach, occasionally mystic.

WS Of this "art business" you say: "No violence can destroy it, no sneering can belittle it." This reminds me of Arnold's claim that humanistic culture will survive because of an instinct for

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"self-preservation" in the race. Would you say there is an equivalence here?

EMF I'm not too clear about what I can say about our differences. I'm glad to say that we're *very* different.

WS Why did you make the father in *The Longest Journey* so hateful?

EMF It just suited the book.

WS Money—plain pounds, shillings, pence—often enters as a symbol into your writing. You use a pecuniary vocabulary much as Clapham did in its addresses to the Almighty. Money as a theme is obviously important in *Howards End.* Is there any special reason why money should be on your mind, one of the ideas you play with?

EMF Quite right. The issue of money is much more alarming today. *Howards End* is an attempt to master money.

WS Does Gerald have an original? In *Journey* you say that the bully and his victim never forget their first, or earliest, relations. And you have admitted to using that book, or rather certain people in it, as a "compensation device." Is Gerald such a device? Did you have a hard time at Tonbridge, or only a boring one?

EMF I don't think he has any original. I had an unpleasant time at school but not a tragic one.

WS Did you write the satiric poem called "The Higher Patriotism"[23] in *Basileona?* The one beginning, "I fail to see the reason why / Brittania should rule the waves?"

EMF Inquire at the College Library. [I think he prefaced this response with a "no."]

WS In your prose, you seem to have two styles. Your first, best, and prevailing style is a form of plain talk—clear, simply phrased, colloquial, like the opening of "Anonymity": "Do you like to know who a book's by?" The other is a Pateresque, or rather Dickinsonian, decorative "poetic" style (rarely used) of which a good example may be "Songs of Loveliness" in the January 27, 1920 *Daily News and Leader,* beginning "Loveliness and beauty are two sisters, the two divine children that imagination has created out of fact."

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EMF Yes, I'd say Ruskinian. I was not conscious of turning one on and the other off.

WS Most critics don't have much praise for "The Machine Stops," yet I think it is one of your most interesting stories. What point did you want that story to make? Were you aware that Kuno's exit to the outer world images in many ways an actual birth?

EMF Yes, I think it is very interesting now too, though it's too long. The story was saying something new for me. [I think he meant he was trying out a new kind of subject.] As to the point of the story, the point is: get back to the past and what is good in the past. The story contains its own statement—the danger of getting from simplicity to mechanism.

WS I am much taken by the development of what appears to be your "ego-character" in the novels. Philip fades to Rickie to Cecil to Tibby to (jumping 14 years) to Fielding. To what degree were you, in these characters, trying on fictional roles, so to speak *testing* yourself, in new and different situations?

EMF I shouldn't agree to that [said EMF at mention of Fielding]. As to the other question, I didn't do it consciously.

WS You said in your *Paris Review* interview that you like "secrets" from the reader. Was one of the secrets that the character Ford in "Other Kingdom" bears the same name as the editor of the *English Review*? [Ford Madox Ford, who had published "Other Kingdom" in the magazine]. Obviously, Mr. Bons is *snob* spelled backwards. Do you have others you would care to confess? I think I've discovered quite a few, including puns on some of G. E. Moore's popular lines, and the amusing "rabbit" references in *Howards End*, but I should appreciate any clues you want to drop.

EMF Ford is not one of the secrets: It referred to Ford the Elizabethan dramatist, not Ford Madox Ford. Beaumont is another Elizabethan dramatist mentioned.

WS In your recent, new Introduction to *Journey*, you say "the spirit of anti-literature" often jogged your elbow while you were writing it. Would you explain what you meant by that spirit? Why did you encourage this imp of anti-literature—or didn't you?

EMF In those immature days I enjoyed the idea of doing flattering imitations of literature. [I didn't understand this answer, but I didn't pursue it.]

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WS What decided you to write *Alexandria?* I think it is a remarkable book, and remarkably interesting, yet it is very unlike your previous writings. Was it born of a renewed interest in history during the war years? Or simply of your interest in Alexandria?

EMF I was there and was interested in the *place.*

WS One continually hears about an unpublished novel written sometime after *Passage,* and lately the anonymous reader of my manuscript for the Stanford Press noted that he had heard rumors of a novel written within the past 10 years or so. Can you shed any light on these matters?

EMF No statement.

WS Was *Angels* in any way influenced by James's *Ambassadors?*

EMF I felt no conscious influence from *The Ambassadors.* That plot was a late nineteenth-century formula.

WS Do you like *The Spoils of Poynton?*

EMF I like *Spoils* very much. Sometimes there is unnecessary niggling in the book though.

I had a total of 53 questions, but these were the only ones I got to in any formal way.

NOTES

[1] For a list see B. J. Kirkpatrick, *A Bibliography of E. M. Forster,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) E7. By far the most illuminating of these interviews is P. N. Furbank and F. J. H. Haskell, "The Art of Fiction," *Paris Review* 1 (Spring 1953): 28–41. To the list should be added K. W. Grandsden, "E. M. Forster at Eighty," *Encounter* 12 (Jan. 1959): 77–81, and an interview with Peter Orr at King's College Cambridge on 9 Dec. 1961 recorded for the British Council and available on tape in "The Art of the Novelist," series 497, 498, 499, and 929.

[2] "A Conversation with E. M. Forster," *Encounter* 9 (Nov. 1947): 52–57. See p. 52.

[3] *Religion and Art of William Hale White ("Mark Rutherford")* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1955).

[4] The book was *The Apothecary's Shop: Essays on Literature* (London: Secker, 1957). The chapter is entitled "To the Lighthouse or to India?" 169–186. EMF must have liked it, for it praises him over Virginia Woolf, but one wonders whether he would have liked the racism implicit in Enright's statement: "We know that natives are always trying to rape white women . . ." (177).

[5] See *A Writer's Diary, Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf,* ed. Leonard Woolf (London: Hogarth, 1953) 243. On the "tunneling process," see

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p. 61. I had in mind VW's statement on "how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters."

[6] Charles Mauron, the author of *The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature* (1927) and *Aesthetics and Psychology* (1935), labored to make analogies between painting and fiction, literature and psychology. He was an important influence on EMF. See Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1966) 102.

[7] By Constance Talbot. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1927).

[8] *The Bloomsbury Group* (London: Secker, 1954).

[9] "My Early Beliefs," *Two Memoirs* (London: Hart-Davis, 1949) 81.

[10] Dr. and Mrs. Reginald Hale-White. Dr. Hale-White was the author's grandson.

[11] Noel Annan was then Provost of King's College and most helpful to me in my inquiries about Forster. We had many talks about Forster and Bloomsbury. In our first meeting, sometime in October 1957, he cleared the air by saying, "You know Forster's queer, don't you?" I did, but it was helpful to have it confirmed—even though it was not a matter I could, at that date, openly discuss in my book. (I did, however, obliquely hint at it in several places.) Annan had a poor opinion of the unpublished novel and thought I should consider myself lucky in not having to deal with it.

[12] Read *notebooks*. It's interesting that EMF used that term, since he was keeping a commonplace book (since published) at the time.

[13] 6 Feb. 1949: 3, 31.

[14] Nov. 1957: 15–18.

[15] The friend to whom *A Room with a View* is dedicated.

[16] See *Collected Impressions* (New York: Knopf, 1950) 123, and *The Cave and the Mountain* 348, 420.

[17] The other members were, besides Dickinson, Francis W. Hirst, C. F. G. Masterman, G. M. Trevelyan, and Nathaniel Wedd.

[18] The question arose out of an impression rather than any careful checking. It turns out that of 22 *Athenaeum* articles in 1919, only 7 dealt with plays. Almost half consisted of pieces that found a place in *Pharos and Pharillon* and *Abinger Harvest*.

[19] Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (London: Longman, 1864). B. J. Kirkpatrick reports that the concluding 10 paragraphs are extant. See his *Bibliography* 107.

[20] This was included in the scrapbook that EMF had shown me and let me borrow. *Basileona* was an undergraduate magazine.

[21] The conflict was between Sir William Willcocks and another engineer in the Egyptian administration, Sir Murdoch MacDonald. Murdoch won his libel suit, so the reprinting of the article constituted a repeating of the libel. Forster and Arnold's had in the end to pay £500 as well as withdraw the piece. See P. N. Furbank, *E. M. Forster: A Life*, 2 vols. (London: Secker, 1978) 2: 211. As I remember, a copy of the original article was included in the scrapbook that EMF loaned me.

[22] EMF said more than this, but this was the gist. This image grew in my imagination and became the central image of *The Cave and the Mountain*.

[23] Swinburne had written a devastating parody of Tennyson's "The Higher Pantheism," and this may be an attempt to do the same in a political vein.

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The Maturing of F. Scott Fitzgerald

ALAN MARGOLIES

During the few past years, as our society has become even more conscious of the negative effects of ethnic stereotyping, there has been increased criticism of Fitzgerald's depiction of African Americans and Jews in *The Great Gatsby*. Some question the portrayal of the African Americans who pass Gatsby and Nick Carraway on the Queensboro Bridge: "As we crossed Blackwell's Island," Nick says, "a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish Negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry" (55). That physical description as well as the use of the word *bucks* is disturbing. Others question the portrayal of Meyer Wolfshiem, suggesting that it reflects the opinions of those who believed that Jews were less than human, more like animals: "A small flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half darkness" (55).

An obvious response is not to excuse Fitzgerald but to suggest that the United States during the writer's lifetime was racist and anti-Semitic in many respects, and, further, that Fitzgerald was not the only major writer of the time to employ ethnic stereotypes (see, e.g., Fiedler 78–81, Gross and Hardy 1–104). In addition, one must note that his short stories appeared in some of the most popular magazines, and the editors of these publications, as well as his editors at Scribner's, the publishers of his books, while making certain not to include overtly sexual or blasphemous passages, did not seem to object to this ethnic stereotyping. But these explanations do not seem to satisfy everyone.

What is less obvious is that despite this stereotyping—and it was not restricted to African Americans and Jews—Fitzgerald felt differently

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about two vicious forms of racism that existed during his lifetime, Nordicism and lynching.

Criticism of Fitzgerald's attitude toward African Americans and Jews, of course, is not new. As early as 1947, Milton Hindus in *Commentary* concluded that "Fitzgerald does not allow a single redeeming characteristic to his Jewish gambler, not even so much redemption as Shakespeare allows to Shylock in his dominantly villainous portrait." Further, while allowing that the portrayal reflected "the *fashionable anti-Semitism* of the 1920's," Hindus stated that *"anti-Semitism is a component part of the novel"* (510; the italics are Hindus's). In 1967, Robert Forrey, in *Phylon: The Atlantic University Review of Race and Culture*, pointed to many examples of Fitzgerald's disparaging references to African Americans and concluded: "On the question of race, Fitzgerald does not belong in the liberal tradition in American letters" (295). Both Forrey and Hindus agreed, however, that Fitzgerald's later fiction, in particular *The Last Tycoon*, reflected a much more sympathetic outlook. In the years since these articles appeared, others have added their voices, most agreeing in general with these early opinions (see, e.g,. Donaldson 182–88).

The greatest amount of stereotyping in Fitzgerald's writing involves African Americans, who are portrayed mainly as servants and comic characters, and it began very early. In *Coward* (1913), an amateur play set in the South before the Civil War and written by Fitzgerald in St. Paul when he was 17, humor is achieved by having Jefferson, the butler, speak in malapropisms. "I renounce Mistah James Holworthy," he says when Holworthy enters (*St. Paul Plays* 64). Stereotyping is also used for humor in "The Camel's Back" (1920) when a waiter is called on to marry a couple at a dance; it is supposed to be a joke but turns out less than funny when we discover that he is also a Baptist minister. He is introduced as "Jumbo, obese negro" (*Six Tales of the Jazz Age* 54). Soon after, when he takes out a Bible, one white onlooker says, "Yea! Jumbo's got a Bible!" and a second then responds, "Razor, too, I'll bet!" (54). Another stereotype occurs in "Dice, Brassknuckles & Guitar" (1923) when Jim Powell, a southern white, who gives guitar lessons to northern whites, says, "Why, when I've given 'em two lessons you'd think some of 'em was colored" (*Short Stories* 246). In "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz" (1922), the wealthy Washington family is waited on by black slaves who are prevented from knowing that the Civil War freed them; one of them is named

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"Gygsum," presumably, suggests Forrey (295), a racist pun. Another stereotype is in "The Ice Palace" (1920) when Sally Carrol's northern fiancée complains that because of the influence of the southern blacks the southern whites also have become "lazy and shiftless" (*Short Stories* 63). Elsewhere we find other stereotypes as well as the use of words and phrases such as "darkies" and "noisy niggery street fairs" again in "The Ice Palace" (*Short Stories* 54, 50), "nigger songs" in "The Last of the Belles" (1929; *Short Stories* 451), and "niggerish feet" in "Crazy Sunday" (1932; *Short Stories* 704).

Possibly some of these may have been Fitzgerald's attempt to portray contemporary speech; this was the way some whites referred to blacks at the time. When Henry Clay Marston ("The Swimmers" [1929]), a Virginian whose grandfather freed his slaves in 1858, speaks about returning from France to the United States and says, "It's going to be pretty awful at first . . . but there are still a few good nigger cooks, and we'll probably have two bathrooms" (*Short Stories* 502), this probably was Fitzgerald's attempt to reflect how a southerner of Marston's background might speak. Further, there are instances where the racial remarks seem purposeful for dramatic reasons. In *Tender Is the Night* (1934) various blacks are referred to by the narrator as a "colored man" (105), "Negro" (106, 109), "Afro-European," and "Afro-American" (106). A footman refers to "a colored fellow" (103). Dick Diver, on the other hand, says of the murdered Jules Peterson, "[I]t's only some nigger scrap" (110). In addition, he denigrates Nicotera, the actor with whom Rosemary may be having an affair, when he says, "He's a spic!" (218). And when he is beaten up and jailed in Rome, he yells, "You dirty Wops!" (228). Late in the novel the narrator tells us that Dick, when criticized, "would suddenly unroll a long scroll of contempt for some person, race, class, way of life, way of thinking" (267). Here, we are seeing the defects in Dick's not-so-perfect personality—he is extremely proud of his ability to control himself—and we are seeing his decline.

But not all of Fitzgerald's readers were satisfied with these racist concepts. In the July 21, 1934, issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*, in "No Flowers," Fitzgerald used the word *buck* once again, this time to refer to members of an orchestra: "Jim Europe and his bucks were enthroned at one end of the hall, and some Toscanini of Tangos at the other" (*The Price Was High* 531). This time he was taken to task, possibly directly for the first time. On July 23, 1934, just two days after the date of the issue, Earl W. Wilkins, an avid reader of Fitzgerald, wrote the novelist a three-page letter perceptively discussing the writer's work, but criticizing his choice of language. "Must all male Negroes in your books and stories

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be called 'bucks'?" Wilkins inquired (Donaldson 187). Fitzgerald replied two weeks later. Unfortunately, we do not have his answer, but he did save Wilkins's letter. It must have made an impression.

There are far fewer references to Jews in Fitzgerald's fiction, but the stereotypes are no less disturbing. In "May Day" (1920), a crowd beats up a socialist, a "God damn Bolshevski," delivering a speech. He is "a gesticulating little Jew with long black whiskers, who was waving his arms and delivering an excited but succinct harangue" (*Short Stories* 108). James W. Tuttleton is correct in suggesting that this description is "a rather confused and ambivalent affair." Whereas Fitzgerald is sympathetic to socialism here, says Tuttleton, the portrayal of the Jew, on the other hand, is an example of "Fitzgerald's own American nativism" (190), in other words, bigotry.

Then, in 1922, in *The Beautiful and Damned*, Fitzgerald stereotyped the speech and gestures of two New Yorkers: "Two young Jewish men passed [Anthony Patch], talking in loud voices and craning their necks here and there in fatuous supercilious glances" (25). The physical description of Joseph Bloeckman, the moviemaker, also relies on ethnic stereotyping. Bloeckman is a "stoutening, ruddy Jew of about thirty-five, with an expressive face under smooth sandy hair" who introduces himself "with a little too evident assurance" and emits "two slender strings of smoke from nostrils overwide" (93–94). On the other hand, when the broke and drunk Anthony calls Bloeckman a "Goddam Jew" (437) at the end of the novel and is then beaten up, this may be dramatically acceptable since Fitzgerald is demonstrating how despicable Anthony has become.

This portrayal was followed by that of Wolfshiem in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), an evil man who wears human molars as cufflinks, possibly Gatsby's only friend, a man who offers Nick "a business gonnegtion" (56). Once again we see the ethnic stereotyping and again with its emphasis on noses. Not only is he a "flat-nosed Jew" with "two fine growths of hair" that "luxuriated in either nostril"; soon after we are told that he has an "expressive nose" (55). Then Nick tells us that "Mr. Wolfshiem's nose flashed at me indignantly" and "[h]is nostrils turned to me in an interested way" (56). Of course, one can argue that one of Fitzgerald's methods in the novel was to contrast various physical characteristics, but the description of Wolfshiem still seems to be an example of ethnic stereotyping.

But this stereotyping was not confined just to African Americans and Jews. In "The Girl from Lazy J" (1911), for example, that brief amateur play that Fitzgerald wrote when he was not yet 15, the villain,

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a Mexican, is referred to as a "lazy greaser" (*St. Paul Plays* 15). Later, the young hero, Jack, tells his uncle: "I don't like the looks of that fellow and you'd better be careful with these Mexicans, Uncle. They'd as soon knife a man as they would a dog." (16). Three years later in the 1914 play "Assorted Spirits," the young Fitzgerald, who was living in Minnesota, a state with a large Scandinavian population, assigned the role of a stupid servant to a Swede named Hulda—"that damned Swede girl" (94) a character says—and Fitzgerald used Hulda's accent to get laughs. Six years later, in the short story "The Cut Glass Bowl" (1920), another Swedish servant appears replete with accent. This time her name is Hilda, and once again Swedes are criticized: "Careless! Servants all that way nowadays. If [Evylyn] could get a good Irishwoman—but you couldn't any more—and these Swedes—" (*Flappers and Philosophers* 102).

Elsewhere, Fitzgerald used other ethnic stereotypes. In *This Side of Paradise* (1920), Amory Blaine is repelled in a railroad car by "stinking aliens—Greeks, he guessed, or Russians" (139). In "The Pusher in the Face" (1925), one of two men who intend to hold up a restaurant is described as a "swarthy Greek with sour eyes" (*The Price Was High* 106). In "The Jelly Bean" (1920), it is suggested that Nancy Lamar's wildness may be at least partly because her mother was born in Budapest; in other words, it's a trait to be expected from Hungarians or possibly Gypsies. In other fiction, Italians, Spanish, Poles, Arabs, Chinese, even Irish, also did not escape Fitzgerald's stereotyping. And sometimes it appears where one least expects it. In "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" (1920), Fitzgerald suggests that there is something intrinsically surreptitious about Native Americans. At the beginning of the story, Marjorie complains that her cousin Bernice is far from vivacious, that it may be because of "that crazy Indian blood in Bernice," and that Bernice's quiet nature is "a reversion to type." "Indian women," she believes, "all just sat around and never said anything" (*Short Stories* 31). Marjorie's mother thinks this is silly. But at the end of the story Fitzgerald reverts back to this idea of ethnic stereotyping when Bernice moves "stealthily" to her bureau, takes her shears, "softly" enters Marjorie's room, and "deftly" cuts off her cousin's braids: "'Huh!' [Bernice] giggled wildly. 'Scalp the selfish thing!'" (46–47).

Yet these ideas represented only one aspect of Fitzgerald's feelings. In contrast, he soon was to indicate his opposition to Nordicism, a contemporaneous theory of racial superiority. In May 1921, soon after his unhappy first visit to Europe, he wrote to Edmund Wilson:

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> God damn the continent of Europe. It is of merely antiquarian interest. Rome is only a few years behind Tyre and Babylon. The negroid streak creeps northward to defile the Nordic race. Already the Italians have the souls of blackamoors. Raise the bars of immigration and permit only Scandinavians, Teutons, Anglo-Saxons and Celts to enter. France made me sick. Its silly pose as the thing the world has to save. I think it's a shame that England and America didn't let Germany conquer Europe. It's the only thing that would have saved the fleet of tottering old wrecks. (*Letters* 326)

Fitzgerald recognized the racism implicit in these possibly jocular statements and seemed to abhor it. "My reactions," he wrote "were all philistine, anti-socialistic, provincial and racially snobbish." Yet he continued in the same vein as previously: "I believe at last in the white man's burden. We are as far above the modern Frenchman as he is above the Negro. Even in art!" And so on (*Letters* 326). In *The Beautiful and Damned*, published the following year, Maury Noble in one section of a long, sarcastic, iconoclastic speech, expounds on these racist ideas:

> Man was beginning a grotesque and bewildered fight with nature—nature, that by the divine and magnificent accident had brought us to where we could fly in her face. She had invented ways to rid the race of the inferior and thus give the remainder strength to fill her higher—or, let us say, her more amusing—though still unconscious and accidental intentions. And, actuated by the highest gifts of the enlightenment, we were seeking to circumvent her. In this republic I saw the black beginning to mingle with the white—in Europe there was taking place an economic catastrophe to save three or four diseased and wretchedly governed races from the one mastery that might organize them for material prosperity.[1] (255)

But since Fitzgerald disparages all the major characters in this novel, Maury's speech is part of Fitzgerald's satire. In 1923, Fitzgerald clarified his beliefs: "No one has a greater contempt than I have for the recent hysteria about the Nordic theory," he wrote (*In His Own Time* 143). Further, he amplified on this in *The Great Gatsby*.

When Tom Buchanan talks about "'The Rise of the Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard," he is referring to Nordicism. "It's a fine book and everybody ought to read it," he says. "The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff," he says stupidly; "it's been proved" (14). Daisy Buchanan makes fun of him. More importantly, Fitzgerald's narrator Nick Carraway affirms the novelist's distaste when he tells us that

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"[t]here was something pathetic in [Tom's] concentration as if his complacency, more acute than of old, was not enough to him any more" (14). The topic recurs later in the Plaza Hotel. "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr. Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife" says Tom, suspicious about Gatsby. "Well, if that's the idea you can count me out. . . . Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white." Again Nick sneers at these ideas, referring to them as "impassioned gibberish" (101).

Most critics believe that in mentioning "'The Rise of the Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard," Fitzgerald was thinking of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color* (1920). (See, e.g., Lehan 86–88 and *The Great Gatsby* 183, note.) Stoddard had suggested that the population of the world was changing, and that the white world was becoming outnumbered. "There can be no doubt that at present the colored races are increasing very much faster than the white," Stoddard had written (7). Stoddard believed in white solidarity and restricting the immigration of nonwhites. He also believed that of three racial groups—Alpines, Mediterraneans, and Nordics—the last were superior. Thus he also advocated restricting the immigration into the United States of people from Southeastern and Eastern Europe. In 1922, in *The Revolt Against Civilization*, Stoddard argued that inborn degeneracy threatened civilization; it resulted in "inefficiency, stupidity, pauperism, crime and other forms of antisocial conduct" (100). Of course, there were others at the time who were pushing similar ideas. One was Madison Grant, author of *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), another work advocating Nordicism, whose introduction in *The Rising Tide of Color* supported Stoddard. "The backbone of Western civilization is racially Nordic," Grant wrote (xxix). (See, e.g., Gidley 173.)

Nordicism was related in a number of ways but not wholly to the theory of eugenics, which had transformed Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest into the idea that various traits are inherited, that the human race can be improved by controlled selective breeding, and the corollary idea that the breeding of those least fit should be discouraged. One of these eugenicists was Henry Herbert Goddard, and this is presumably the Goddard to whom Tom Buchanan in part is referring. In 1912 in his *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*, Goddard had studied a family of undesirables—prostitutes, alcoholics, criminals, and paupers—and concluded that feebleminded-ness, not environment, was responsible for these social ills and was

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hereditary and transmitted. In 1922, Lathrop Stoddard wrote that this study of the Kallikak family was "a striking illustration of how superiority and degeneracy are alike rigidly determined by heredity" (*The Revolt Against Civilization* 96).

In 1919, in a series of four lectures at Princeton, published the following year as *Human Efficiency and Levels of Intelligence*, Henry Herbert Goddard had also discussed the effect of varying intelligence in the population on democracy. In particular, he was apprehensive of those of lower intelligence. "It would seem a self-evident fact," he wrote, "that the feeble-minded should not be allowed to take part in civic affairs; should not be allowed to vote" (99). "Obviously," he said, "there are enough people of high intelligence to guide the Ship of State, if they are put in command. . . . The disturbing fear is that the masses—the seventy million or even the eighty-six million—will take matters into their own hands" (97). The result of the work of Henry Herbert Goddard and others was the harsher Immigration Act of 1924 (Shipman 127–28).

It is not known when Fitzgerald first knew of these theories and how much, if any, of Stoddard and Goddard he read. But sometime between 1921 and 1931 (when Zelda Fitzgerald's father, Judge A. D. Sayre, died), he became aware of a volume that included a discussion of Goddard's work with the Kallikak family (30–33) and Samuel J. Holmes's survey of contemporaneous theories of eugenics, *The Trend of the Race*. "This is too long for a mouthful but the most interesting to me," Fitzgerald wrote in an undated inscription on the front free endpaper of a copy that he gave to Judge Sayre.[2]

One can only guess whether Fitzgerald, in *The Great Gatsby*, purposely combined Goddard's name with the title of a book that sounded like one by Stoddard or whether he confused the two names. Associating Tom Buchanan's dullness with someone who has studied the Kallikuk family and the feebleminded, however, is very funny and may have been intentional on Fitzgerald's part, just as it was his intention to contrast Tom Buchanan with Wolfshiem. Tom is obviously a Nordic, especially with his straw-colored hair. He has two truly American names, combining possibly the first names of Thomas Jefferson or Tom Paine and the last name of President Buchanan. (Naming characters after American heroes was not new in Fitzgerald's work.) Tom has "a gruff husky tenor" voice, "a rather hard mouth," "two shining, arrogant eyes," and a body with "enormous power" (9). Wolfshiem, the Jew, on the other hand, has tiny ratlike eyes that glance furtively around the room and seem to stand out in the darkness. He

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eats "with ferocious delicacy" (57), like an animal. Even his name suggests something subhuman. Yet, there are similarities between Wolfshiem and Buchanan. Tom is involved in a murder; Wolfshiem is presumably a bootlegger and a counterfeiter, and, above all, the man who fixed the 1919 World Series.

Wolfshiem's hypocrisy is illustrated in a number of ways. He is portrayed in a humorous way as being false to his religion and, in addition, lacking taste. At the end of the novel when Nick visits Wolfshiem to convince him to attend Gatsby's funeral, Wolfshiem is whistling "The Rosary," one of the most popular songs of the early part of the century. Despite its close to 2.4 million copies of sheet music sold through 1924, it was a sentimental, maudlin religious song that disparaged a serious subject (Sullivan 424).

But Wolfshiem's cover for his illicit business, "The Swastika Holding Company," is not so funny. The swastika, an ancient sign as well as sacred symbol, had appeared early in Christian art and was associated early with the Christian cross (see, e.g., Ross). Fitzgerald had even mentioned a swastika in "Absolution," that 1924 story that had probably been part of an early version of Gatsby and had associated this swastika in the story with Christianity. In "Absolution," Father Schwartz, the crazed priest whose faith is vacillating, first listens to young Rudolph's confession of sin and then stares at a pattern in the carpet in his office in the church, at "the swastikas and the flat bloomless vines and the pale echoes of flowers" (*Short Stories* 269). It is a decoration, of course, but it also symbolizes Father Schwartz's conflict: the swastika suggesting his faith, the flat bloomless vines and the pale echoes of the flowers suggesting the fading of his faith. This association of the swastika with Christianity in "Absolution" may have some relationship with Wolfshiem's whistling of "The Rosary" and his "Swastika Holding Company." Of course, the swastika was also a symbol used by Native Americans. In *Gatsby*, according to some, it "evokes the 'old warm world' of the Great West in the immemorial sign of American Indians" (Stern 261).

But Fitzgerald most likely also was thinking of what was happening in Austria and Germany at the time, when Jews were beginning to be persecuted under this Nazi symbol. By 1924 and 1925, when Fitzgerald was writing and revising *Gatsby*, the swastika was relatively widespread in these countries as an anti-Semitic symbol, despite what some have said. (See, e.g., Stern 261 and *The Great Gatsby* 203, note.) In fact, it had been associated with anti-Semitism in Europe even before 1919, when the Nationalist Socialist party was formed and soon after adopted it as a symbol (see, e.g., Waite 207, note).

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In *Mein Kampf,* Hitler discussed the design of the Nazi flag with its swastika and then the display of half a dozen flags in Munich in 1920 (735–37). Journalist William L. Shirer states that the Nazis were displaying the swastika openly during this period (43–44). Photographs taken in 1923 show members of the Nationalist Socialist German Worker's Party in Bavaria wearing the swastika armband and carrying the Nazi flag during the struggle for power (Gordon, versos 199, 200, 333).

Newspapers of the time, too, connected the swastika with anti-Semitic activities in Europe. A two-column article headlined "New Popular Idol Rises in Bavaria," in the *New York Times,* November 21, 1922, tells of Hitler's "30,000 organized followers in Munich alone." Of them correspondent Cyril Brown wrote:

> The new converts made at these rallies, those who absolutely and unconditionally pledge themselves to Hitler and the cause, are carefuly [sic] sifted through and the pick of them who pass the standard military muster are organized into 'storm troops' with gray shirts, brassards in the old imperial colors, black and an anti-Semitic Swastika cross in a white circular field on read [sic]; armed also with blackjacks and it is popularly whizpered [sic], revolvers. (21)

Other briefer articles from Austria in the *Times* in 1923 and 1924 tell of a riot between Social Democrats and "the Austrian Branch of the German anti-Semitic 'Swastika Brigade'" (April 4, 1923) and of a National Socialist Swastika detachment referred to as "Monarchist Anti-Semites" attacking a Social Democratic function (July 8, 1924). Wolfshiem was using the swastika, the symbol that even then was being used to kill his relatives and friends in Europe, as a front for his criminal activities.

When Nick confronts Tom on Fifth Avenue and Tom denies his part in Gatsby's murder, Fitzgerald joins Buchanan at the wrist to Wolfshiem, the man who owned those cuff buttons made of human molars. Fitzgerald makes the connection when he refers to Tom and Daisy "smash[ing] up things and creatures and then retreat[ing] back into their money or their vast carelessness" (139). Then Nick speaks about another pair of cuff buttons, those that Tom may purchase:

> I shook hands with him; it seemed silly not to, for I felt suddenly as though I were talking to a child. Then he went into the jewelry store to buy a pearl necklace—or perhaps only a pair of cuff links—rid of my provincial squeamishness forever. (139–40)

In 1939 or 1940, Fitzgerald denied that the portrayal of Wolfshiem was anti-Semitic. Frances Kroll Ring, his secretary at the time, writes:

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> He said he had, on occasion, been rebuked for his portrait of the "small, fat and disloyal" Meyer Wolfsheim [sic] in Gatsby. Scott was stung by the criticism which he considered unfair. Wolfsheim was a character whose behavior fulfilled a function in the story and had nothing to do with race or religion. He was a gangster who happened to be Jewish. (49)

Maybe Fitzgerald was protesting a little too much, especially since Ring herself was Jewish. But one aspect of Wolfshiem's function in *Gatsby* is to expose the hypocrisy of Nordicism, a theory that Fitzgerald despised: Buchanan, the Nordic, the man of privilege who comes from an old respected American family, is no less evil than Wolfshiem, the Jew, one of those that Goddard and Stoddard and their ilk wanted to keep out of this country.

During the years that followed *Gatsby*, Fitzgerald's portrayal of Jews became sympathetic. "The Hotel Child," published in 1931, is a delightful portrayal of an 18-year-old American adolescent with her wealthy mother and brother in Europe, a family that contrasts with too-proud society Europeans. The youngster, who reminds us in some ways of another of Fitzgerald's teenagers, Josephine Perry, is attracted to an older man, an adventurer, Count Borowki. It is a humorous tale, especially with its happy surprise ending when we discover that she hasn't given in to the count's wiles but instead is the means to his downfall. What is different about this Jamesian-type story—contrasting Americans and Europeans—is that this American family is Jewish and the young woman's name is Fifi Schwartz. She is criticized for her "ghastly taste" (*Short Stories* 599), but this is because she is an American and dresses for beauty and dresses older than she is, like many teenagers. Her mother ignores these negative comments: "[S]he had been a Jewess a long time, and it was a matter of effortless indifference to her what was said by the groups around the room" (599). Later, when Fifi's brother misbehaves and Mrs. Schwartz suggests they return to the United States, Fifi does not want to go, partly because of the anti-Semitism. "We can always meet people," her mother says; "We always have." That's not enough for Fifi. "But you know it's different," she says; "everybody is so bigoted there" (605).

Fitzgerald once again had used his stereotype of the large Jewish nose. But here it is humorous and sympathetic. The adventurous Count Borowki, who is trying to make a play for Fifi and her money, praises her beauty. "There is no flaw or fault in you," he says. "'Oh, Yes' said Fifi modestly. 'I got a sort of big nose. Would you know I was Jewish?'" Soon after she adds, "Besides, my forehead is too high" (608).

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The following year, in "Crazy Sunday," Fitzgerald continued this theme when he wrote about screenwriter Joel Coles who attends a Hollywood party, makes fun of a Jew, an independent producer, a Sam Goldwyn type, and is booed. He denigrates not only the producer's malapropisms but also his dialect. "His burlesque," says the narrator, "was based upon the cultural limitations of Mr. Dave Silverstein, an independent producer." Silverstein is outlining a film treatment. It will be, he says, "a story of divorce, the younger generators and the Foreign Legion." Of the heroine he continues: "—then she says she feels this sex appil for him and he burns out and says 'Oh go on destroy yourself'—." Isn't this the way Wolfshiem talked? But here Coles has made a fool of himself. For the most part there is silence, people are leaving, and then he hears "the Great Lover"—a character based on actor John Gilbert—, "his eye hard and empty as the eye of a needle," booing. "It was the resentment of the professional toward the amateur, of the community toward the stranger, the thumbs-down of the clan" (*Short Stories* 702).

The portrayal of Jews in *The Last Tycoon* is also largely positive. Stahr, the hero, is Jewish; his nemesis, Brady, is Irish. Fitzgerald, we are told, did this purposely. "It was a time when Hitler dominated the news and Scott avoided making the villain Jewish," writes Frances Kroll Ring (49). Apparently, he was changing. To Tony Buttitta in 1935 he had said of his new friend's name: "Sounds Italian. I hated Italians once. Jews too. Most foreigners. Mostly my fault like everything else. Now I only hate myself" (5). In what appears to be a very prescient remark, he wrote in his *Notebooks*, presumably just before or just at the beginning of World War II: "[W]e and the Jews are going to be butchered[.] We the liberals because we were too kind, the Jews because they were too wise" (321).

But Fitzgerald's attitude toward Jews was not consistent. In 1931, at about the same time as he was composing "The Hotel Child," he wrote in "Echoes of the Jazz Age" of the Americans of the time wandering through Europe that they "had the human value of Pekinese, bivalves, cretins, goats." He referred to them as "neanderthals." Among others he was critical of "a fat Jewess, inlaid with diamonds" (*The Crack-Up* 21, 20). In his notes to his final novel he wrote:

> Hell, the best friend I have in Hollywood is a Jew—another of my best dozen friends is a Jew. Two of the half dozen men I admire most in America are Jews and two of my half dozen best men in History are Jews. But why do they have to be so damned conceited. (*Notebooks* 333)

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Alcohol apparently also caused the bigotry to surface. Frances Kroll Ring writes:

> [W]hen he was in a devilishly alcoholic state, he was quick to tell me that Sheilah [Graham] was "part" Jewish, that Jean, the nurse, was "part" Indian, as if it were some secret that would bring me over to his side against them. He knew that I was Jewish, but I was his secretary and confidente and had given him no cause for name-calling. (49)

And while many Jews are portrayed favorably in *The Last Tycoon*, the portrayal of Schwartze, a formerly successful moviemaker who commits suicide, may not satisfy everyone. Again Fitzgerald was portraying a Jew as animal-like. Schwartze is "a middle-aged Jew who alternately talked with nervous excitement or else crouched as if ready to spring" (4). Further, once again Fitzgerald dwelled on the Jew's nose, although again some may feel Fitzgerald is merely contrasting features of different individuals: "[T]he exaggerated Persian nose and oblique eye-shadow were as congenital as the tip-tilted Irish redness around my father's nostrils," says Cecilia Brady, the narrator (7).

This same erratic pattern is evident in Fitzgerald's changing attitude toward African Americans. The disturbing portrayal in *The Great Gatsby* of the African Americans on the Queensboro Bridge serves a satirical function. Gatsby has taken Nick for a ride, and they pass people from Southeastern Europe, possibly Greeks, possibly Italians, all Stoddard's Mediterraneans. Nick says, using what some may feel are ethnic stereotypes:

> A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of south-eastern Europeans and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their somber holiday. (55)

The mourners are in cheerful carriages—this is meant to be ironic—and Nick is happy that Gatsby's expensive, garish car that catches their attention will take their mind off death. This is meant to be funny. Next comes the passage with the limousine with its white chauffeur and the African Americans in the back, another group of those about whom Goddard and Stoddard had warned us.

What Goddard and Stoddard and others were afraid of—the arrival in this country of huge numbers of blacks and Jews and

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Mediterraneans—was happening. Further, while some in *Gatsby* are not successful, and while those from East Egg, like Tom and Daisy, won't admit those from West Egg into their society, others, like many at Gatsby's party and these African Americans on the Queensboro Bridge, are achieving economic success. The country was changing and Fitzgerald was noting this.

And similar to his treatment of Jews, as he grew older, Fitzgerald's treatment of African Americans became more sympathetic. In *The Last Tycoon*, a man with three cows appears near the Hermitage. The description is more realistic than in early Fitzgerald:

> They were real cows with warm flesh, silky flanks and the Negro grew gradually real out of the darkness with his big brown eyes staring close to the car, as Wylie gave him a quarter. He said "Thank you—thank you" and stood there and the cows mooed again into the night as we drove off. (9)

Later, producer Stahr confronts another African American collecting grunion. He is an intellectual; he reads Emerson. He complains about the quality of moving pictures and tells Stahr he never lets his children attend them. Later Stahr thinks about this conversation and is sufficiently influenced to want to make better-quality pictures. For many, too, the portrayal of the African American couple in "Dearly Beloved," written at about the same time but unpublished until after Fitzgerald's death, is endearing.

But similar to his feelings about other groups, Fitzgerald was not consistent during this later period in his attitude toward African Americans. To Tony Buttitta in the summer of 1935, he referred to "Negro rights and equality" as "gibberish" (164). A year later, in "Handle With Care," he used another ethnic stereotype to refer to his changing psychological makeup: "I have now at last become a writer only. The man I had persistently tried to be became such a burden that I have 'cut him loose' with as little compunction as a Negro lady cuts loose a rival on Saturday night." Yet, a page later, he not only refers to but also identifies with the plight of the African American:

> I shall manage to live with the new dispensation, though it has taken some months to be certain of the fact. And just as the laughing stoicism which has enabled the American Negro to endure the intolerable conditions of his existence has cost him his sense of the truth—so in my case there is a price to pay. (*The Crack-Up* 83–84)

These contradictions would continue until the end of Fitzgerald's life. But just as he had had strong feelings about Nordicism very early,

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he had strong feelings very early too about the many lynchings in this country of African Americans. In 1922, in "Two for a Cent," Fitzgerald had written about a white man, a traveler, who returns south after 25 years and talks about "those two or three dozen loafers standing in front of the stores on Jackson Street—in thatched straw hats. . . . Do you know the ones I mean?" "Jelly-beans," his listener replies, "We call them Jelly-beans. No-account lot of boys all right. They got signs up in front of most of the stores asking 'em not to stand there." "They ought to!" the first responds. And he continues: "That's my picture of the South now, you know—a skinny, dark-haired young man with a gun on his hip and a stomach full of corn liquor or Dope Dola, leaning up against a drug store waiting for the next lynching" (*Price*, 38).

In 1926, Fitzgerald returned to this theme when he tried his hand at writing a mystery, "The Dance," published in *The Red Book Magazine*. It was "the first detective story I've ever tried," he wrote his agent Harold Ober. "I'm afraid its no good" (*As Ever* 85). The plot was too convoluted and too obvious. A woman kills her lover, but the shot is heard while she is standing on a bandstand in view of many people. The mystery is solved when we discover that the shot heard was fired out of the window by an accomplice, that the lover had been killed earlier, shot while the band was playing, the music covering the sound of the earlier gunshot.

Yet within was an unforgettable snapshot of the mistreatment of African Americans. The narrator, a New York woman who visits a southern town, tells of her "rather curious horror of small towns":

> In the cities [she says], everything good or bad eventually comes out, comes out of people's hearts, I mean. Life moves about, moves on, vanishes. In the small towns—those of between five and twenty-five thousand people—old hatreds, old and unforgotten affairs, ghostly scandals and tragedies, seem unable to die, but live on all tangled up with the natural ebb and flow of outward life.
>
> Nowhere has this sensation come over me more insistently than in the South. Once out of Atlanta and Birmingham and New Orleans, I often have the feeling that I can no longer communicate with the people around me. The men and the girls speak a language wherein courtesy is combined with violence, fanatic morality with corn-drinking recklessness, in a fashion which I can't understand. In "Huckleberry Finn" Mark Twain described some of those towns perched along the Mississippi River, with their fierce feuds and their equally fierce revivals—and some of them haven't fundamentally changed beneath their new surface of flivvers and radios. They are deeply uncivilized to this day.

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> I speak of the South because it was in a small Southern city of this type that I once saw the surface crack for a minute and something savage, uncanny and frightening rear its head. (39)

Fitzgerald describes the setting for the dance and then suddenly shifts gears. For a moment, we are back again to something that Mark Twain might have written:

> An enormous red-faced man in muddy knee boots and with a revolver strapped around his waist, clumped in and paused for a moment at our table before going upstairs to the locker-room. It was Bill Abercrombie, the Sheriff, the son of Congressman Abercrombie. Some of the boys asked him half-whispered questions, and he replied in an attempt at an undertone.
>
> "Yes. . . . He's in the swamp all right; farmer saw him near the crossroads store. . . . Like to have a shot at him myself."
>
> I asked the boy next to me what was the matter.
>
> "Nigger case," he said, "over in Kisko, about two miles from here. He's hiding in the swamp, and they're going in after him tomorrow."
>
> "What'll they do to him?"
>
> "Hang him, I guess."
>
> The notion of the forlorn darky crouching dismally in a desolate bog waiting for dawn and death depressed me for a moment. Then the feeling passed and was forgotten. (41)

But it's not forgotten, as the narrator then encounters another situation, the mystery of the murdered lover, and ends with the following:

> We live in New York. Small towns make us both uncomfortable. Every day we read about the crime-waves in the big cities, but at least a wave is something tangible that you can provide against. What I dread above all things is the unknown depths, the incalculable ebb and flow, the secret shapes of things that drift through opaque darkness under the surface of the sea. (138)

How could Fitzgerald have written with such passion against lynching, openly opposed Nordicism too, and yet used ethnic stereotypes in his writing elsewhere and inveighed at times in his personal life at various minority groups? Nordicism and lynching represented the extremes that many in this country were opposed to. Fitzgerald's ethnic stereotyping, on the other hand, while deplorable, reflected the thinking of many in this country during this period. As the country began to change, especially with its awareness of what was happening in Nazi Germany, Fitzgerald changed too. But even in his last years he retained a residue of these prejudices.[3]

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NOTES

[1] The last sentence was omitted in the first English printing (London: Collins, 1922). Although Fitzgerald said that he was sending a list of corrections to his English publisher, the list is not known to be extant. Thus it cannot be determined if Fitzgerald was responsible for the omission.

[2] The copy with its inscription is in the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum, Montgomery, Alabama. There are no other notes or markings in the book. Stoddard cites Holmes as his source for his discussion of the Kallikak family. Late in life, Fitzgerald was given a copy of Earnest A. Hooten's *Apes, Men, and Morons* (1937), now at Princeton University Library, a work with eugenics beliefs similar in some ways to Goddard's. Hooten was vehemently opposed to "vicious racial propaganda, especially the nonsense of Nordicism" (230), but he did state: "Our real purpose should be to segregate and to eliminate the unfit, worthless, degenerate and antisocial portion of each racial and ethnic strain in our population, so that we may utilize the substantial merits of its sound majority, and the special and diversified gifts of its superior members" (210). There are no notes or markings in Fitzgerald's copy.

[3] For a recent discussion of this topic, with emphasis on "The Hotel Child," see the essay "What Fitzgerald Thought of the Jews: Resisting Type in 'The Hotel Child'" by Barry Gross and Eric Fretz.

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Spark and Newman: Jean Brodie Reconsidered

BENILDE MONTGOMERY

> . . . the most wonderful truths, though communicated once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, . . . have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation.
>
> —John Henry Newman, "Introduction," *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

In her recent autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae* (1993), Muriel Spark confirms that the theological writings of Cardinal Newman played an important role in her conversion to Catholicism. Indeed, she has made this claim before ("Conversion" 58–59), as has her former friend and coeditor, Derek Stanford, who suggests that Newman's and Spark's conversions were similar. Newman, he says, "had been a Catholic without recognizing it. In going over to Rome, he found what he was looking for—what, indeed, he was—though without liking it when he got there" (204). Although in *Curriculum Vitae* Spark comes to repudiate many other of Stanford's claims about her, she does not deny this similarity and, in fact, uses Newman's own point that conversion is "not a thing one could propound 'between the soup and the fish' at a dinner party" to defend her cutting short a discussion of her own (202). Nonetheless, while Spark avoids discussing the particular and difficult process of religious conversion in her autobiography, it is the frequent subject of her fiction, and at the center of her most famous fiction, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, where the process of Sandy's conversion follows, not surprisingly, the outlines drawn by Newman and, as *Curriculum Vitae* suggests, imitated by Spark herself.

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In Newman's scheme, conversion is not a static business but a slow and continuing process. Therefore, conversion, for him, neither concludes nor leads to simple peace or repose. Restating ideas implicit throughout his work, but never more explicitly so than in *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Cardinal Newman speaks in his *Apologia* of Catholic Christianity as an "arena" wherein "Authority" and "Private Judgement" are "combatants in [an] awful, never-ending duel." Newman further insists that "it is necessary for the very life of religion, viewed in its large operations and its history, that [this] warfare should be incessantly carried on" (328). It should be said that this understanding of Catholicism is not unique to Newman. The Austrian Catholic historian, Friedrich Heer, for example, sees the history of Catholicism advancing dialectically between the poles of orthodoxy and heresy. And Thomas J. J. Altizer, commenting on both Newman and Heer, sees Catholicism as an "evolving faith" whose identity at any one time is "a consequence of its internal struggle with heresy," apart from which "the Church would not and could not evolve" (182). So conceived—that is, as an "arena," an "incessant warfare," and "internal struggle"—Catholicism defeats the expectations of those who come to it seeking equanimity and calm, and indeed gives a positive and necessary value to their opposites, that is, to tension and conflict. Even Newman's own boast that since his conversion he has "been in perfect peace and contentment" (*Apologia* 317) explodes in the face of facts. Newman's biography shows that his later life was dominated not by repose but by warfare, and not with the established church from which he had withdrawn but with many inside the church he had joined: suspicious fellow Catholics, particularly the "orthodox" Manning and other ultramontanists who imagined Catholicism not as Newman's dynamic arena of concrete history and struggle but as something static, aloof from its own history and therefore beyond change.

Interestingly, before reading Newman, Spark considered herself primarily a poet and wrote no fiction at all. This fact prompts Alan Kennedy to pinpoint Newman as the common denominator of both Spark's religious conversion and her later literary career (155). Spark, indeed, had postponed her conversion to Catholicism wondering, "If I become a Catholic, will I grow like them?" ("Conversion" 58). She came to see, however, that "the Roman Catholic faith corresponded to what I had always felt and known and believed" (*Curriculum* 202), and consistent with this, she claims that she speaks "far more in my own voice as a Catholic" ("Conversion" 61). Moreover, Spark seems to agree with her character in *Loitering with Intent* (1981) who defends Newman's *Apologia*

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as "among the best" (48) of spiritual autobiographies so thoroughly that she uses it as the model for her own. Even the title Spark chose for her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae* (1993), echoes her spiritual mentor's. So, too, does her choice of an intertextual style: Letters are reprinted, critical reviews are recalled and corrected, poems are reproduced, all, in Newman's words, "to prevent misconception" (*Apologia* 35), and in Spark's, "to put the record straight" (*Curriculum* 11). Although not so speculative and defensive as the *Apologia*, *Curriculum Vitae* ends like it: with its subject's conversion to Catholicism but with no mention of the later tensions that conversion to Catholicism necessarily includes.

Because Spark believes that "the existential quality of a religious experience cannot be simply summed up in general terms" (*Curriculum* 202), she has left speculation on the tensions that accompany conversion to her fiction where, like Newman, her convert-protagonists find in their new Catholicism "incessant warfare" and "internal struggle." For example, Caroline Rose of *The Comforters* keeps running into "spiritual risks" and, in the confusion of voices that she begins to hear, must constantly struggle to distinguish the natural from the supernatural. Barbara Vaughan of *The Mandelbaum Gate* is a "private judging Catholic" caught in a world where all religious and national identities converge, and where she must struggle to balance her sexuality and the demands of Catholic law. In *The Girls of Slender Means*, Spark explicitly associates Selina's desire for "equanimity of body and soul, complete composure whatever the social scene," with the very opposite of Catholicism. Her commitment to equanimity, even in the face of her own death, is the very "vision of evil" that Nicholas Farrington rejects to effect his own conversion, a conversion that brings him not peace but bloody martyrdom as a missionary Brother in Haiti. No less troubled by the discomfort of conversion is Spark's most well-known Catholic, Sandy Stranger, the ill-at-ease cloistered nun in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* whose conversion, like Nicholas Farrington's, includes the rejection of a vision of evil. Here Sandy rejects the vision offered her by the charismatic Miss Brodie, who, both crypto-Catholic and cryptofascist, desires not only that her girls achieve Selina's equanimity ("You girls must learn to cultivate an expression of composure. . . . Walk with your heads up, up like Sybil Thorndike, a woman of noble mien" [33–35]) but also that they assume for her the risks of actual and concrete history that she, aloof and composed like the ultramontanist Catholics of Newman's later years, dare not take.

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Nonetheless, most critics, like Sandy herself, become obsessed only with the character of Jean Brodie and thereby misread the novel as only a character sketch of her. They thereby relegate Sandy to secondary status, paying little heed to the tension between the two characters at the center of the novel and to Sandy's primary role as witness, judge, and "assassin." After all, Sandy's notoriously "small, almost non-existent eyes" (12) observe most, if not all, the action, and more than any of the other Brodie girls, Sandy carries the weight and impact of Brodie's philosophy, confiding to her inquisitor that above literature, politics, and theology, the most profound influence on her development was Miss Brodie (187). While the others remember Brodie sentimentally, she is at the very core of both Sandy's vocation and of her book on the "nature of moral perception" (53), even as that book reacts against Brodie's teachings. Placing the inquisitor both at the end and toward the beginning of the novel, Spark also suggests that much of the novel is Sandy's reminiscence, a suggestion that provides Jay Presson Allen's dramatization of the novel with its structure.

Further, in *Curriculum Vitae* Spark makes such clear links between her own life and Sandy's that one suspects that one of the records Spark wishes to set straight is the importance of Sandy not only as a figure in her most popular novel but also as a key to understanding her own life. For example, in the novel Spark writes of Sandy Stranger that she

> was sometimes embarrassed by her mother being English and calling her "darling," not like mothers of Edinburgh who said "dear." Sandy's mother had a flashy winter coat trimmed with fluffy fox fur like the Duchess of York's while the other mothers wore tweed or, at the most, musquash that would do them all their days. (27–28)

In *Curriculum Vitae*, Spark writes of herself that

> My mother, who was English, used to come and fetch me from school. It was my daily dread that she should open her mouth and thus betray her suspect origins. "Foreigners" were fairly tolerated but "the English" were something quite different. It was not only the accent that betrayed Englishness. It was also turns of phrase and idiomatic usage. . . . My mother also wore a winter coat trimmed with beige fox fur in the style of the then Duchess of York. . . . This was entirely out of place. My mother ought to have worn tweed or, in very cold weather, musquash (21).

Also, at a tea party in the novel, Sandy feels "offended and belittled" when Jenny's mother remarks, "My word . . . they've [Sandy and Jenny]

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been tucking in!" (27). At a similar tea party with her schoolfriend, Frances Niven, Spark records in *Curriculum Vitae* that one of Frances's aunts said, "'Look at them tucking in!' I seemed to be the only child who heard this, and although I didn't make any fuss, I was ridiculously affected" (37). These and numerous other verbal linkages invite readers to reappraise Sandy's function in the novel and, through the specific terms demanded by fiction, to reconsider the nature of Spark's own religious conversion.

Needless to say, not all critics have avoided Sandy and her conversion to Catholicism, but those who do speculate on it tend to read as negative both its dynamism and its accompanying tensions. In spite of what William Lynch, S.J., would call Sandy's courageous "descent into the finite" (27–33)—her willing embrace of those concrete particulars that for Brodie remain ill-conceived wishes—Sandy's critics call her, among other things, "unpleasant" (Kennedy 185), "malicious" and an "aesthete" (Laffin 215, 221). She is said to be "disgusted with humanity" (Friedman 103); her conversion is seen by one critic only as "a retreat from everyday reality" (Bold 71), and by another as "unexplained and unfathomable" (Adler 593). Yet another critic sees the novel's end dominated by a "justified Miss Brodie presiding calmly over a lost innocence" (Kermode 271). These readings, moreover, often suggest a sympathetic Miss Brodie as Sandy's victim. Indeed, Allen's screenplay not only ignores any reference to the religious context in which Spark so carefully sets her novel, it also draws Sandy as a jealous, spiteful teenager who ultimately joins the philistine assault on an otherwise charming spinster. Although Allen's earlier playscript (about which Spark writes that she had the "distinct impression that my views, as author of the book, were not really welcome" [*Curriculum* 61]) at least acknowledges the fact of Sandy's conversion, it places Sandy in a placid convent garden, an image more consistent with Miss Brodie's pre-Raphaelite longings than with the realism of Spark's novel and the dynamic "arena" and "never-ending duel" of Spark's and Newman's vision of Catholicism. Ironically, Ray Shaw's review of a 1994 London revival of the play dismisses this convent scene as a weakness in the play which "does not add anything" to it (1481).

The story of Newman's conversion in the *Apologia* follows the theoretical foundations he laid down earlier in *The Development of Christian Doctrine.* There he defines "development" as "the germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field"

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that "cannot progress at all without cutting across and thereby destroying or modifying and incorporating within itself existing modes of thinking and operating," throwing off "whatever in them it cannot assimilate" (*Development* 38). Indeed, Newman's movement away from the established church toward Roman Catholicism imitates, at least intellectually, this pattern. Although the "great revolution of mind" that occurred during the Long Vacation of 1839 led him to conclude that the established church was in the same relationship with Rome as were the Christian heretical movements of the fifth century (*Apologia* 217), he did not seek formal admission to "the one Fold of Christ," until October 1845 (314), striving during the intervening years to modify, incorporate, assimilate, and, in some instances, throw off those "corruptions" within the established church he found inconsistent with the evolving Apostolic tradition. As Altizer points out, such a theory of doctrinal development (and in the case of the *Apologia* Newman's personal, intellectual development) gives Christian heresy "a fully positive identity" (183), making it one of the necessary and historical poles of the dialectic that grounds and thereby names "integral Catholicism."

Indeed, Nick Farrington's "vision of evil," a vision that for Spark "may be as effective to conversion as a vision of good" (*Slender* 118), has a similar, positive identity, as do the "barbarians" of the Cavafy poem Spark quotes in the novel: "And now what will become of us without the Barbarians? / Those people were some sort of a solution" (11). In *Slender Means*, these "barbarians" are associated with the defeated Nazis. In *Jean Brodie*, Miss Brodie is associated with fascism and has a similar and necessary function in Sandy's conversion. Brodie's presence in the novel is positive insofar as she is, like the "barbarians" of Cavafy's poem and heresy within Newman's scheme, something to negate, transcend, and leave behind as the "inevitable" counterpart and foil of orthodoxy (Altizer 184). Imbued with Calvinism and already having put on the mind of her Roman Catholic lover, Sandy eventually uses "the economy" (a concept Spark borrows from Newman's *Apologia* [395–400]) of Teddy Lloyd's method not only to put a stop to the evil Miss Brodie but also to recognize that Miss Brodie's notable defects "had not been without [their] beneficent and enlarging effects" (126).

Within the walls of the Marcia Blaine School, a school that Spark describes as having an "ordinary rule," an "authorized curriculum," and an "orthodox regime" (9–11), Miss Brodie is a self-proclaimed heretic. She declines to participate in the "never-ending duel" that Newman finds "necessary for the very life of religion" by declaring a separate peace in favor of "private judgement." Creating a schismatic

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sect with herself as a rival Pope, she is not so much a "parody of the Christian Church" (Lodge 136) as she is the type of all Christian heresy: gnostic, disembodied, exclusive, discontinuous with a catholic and universal tradition, and immune to history. Specifically, in her "contempt for the Modern side" (91), Jean Brodie resembles most those late-nineteenth-century Protestants, Tractarians, and ultramontanist Catholics who, in Newman's words, are "ever hunting for a fabulous primitive simplicity" (*Essays* 234). Disillusioned at every turn by the concrete messiness of actual history and the primal reflexes of the body, these despairing, sectarian heretics, of whom Brodie is the specific instance, triumphed for a time in the production of, among other things, a "Syllabus of Errors," parodied by Spark in Brodie's list of do's and don't's: A window opened 6 inches "is perfectly adequate. More is vulgar" (68); roll down your sleeves "at once, we are civilized beings" (20). Horrible to say, in their own prime, many of these anti-modernist, ultramontanist Catholics fell, like Brodie, too easily into the arms of twentieth-century fascism.

Although the exceptional martyr may prove the rule, fascism flourished first in those parts of the world most self-consciously "Catholic." Dare we remember that as the von Trapps escaped across the Alps, their coreligionist archbishop in Vienna, Cardinal Innitzer, was rushing to salute Adolf Hitler on his balcony and to support the Anschluss in a pastoral letter that ended with a carefully handwritten "Heil Hitler!"? Spark's fictional counterpart of Innitzer is, of course, Miss Brodie, who, "by temperament suited only to the Roman Catholic Church" (125), stands "in her brown dress like a gladiator with raised arm," shouting "Hail Caesar! . . . radiantly to the window light" (68). In that image and others like it (Mary MacGregor, Brodie's Jew, swallowed up in flames; Joyce Emily killed as she rushes toward Franco's army), Spark lifts the novel out of the idiosyncratic and beyond the "isolated communities" (Parrinder 28) about which she is sometimes accused of writing. If readers and critics, too, succumb easily to Miss Brodie's charms, we are in the company of those midcentury Scottish schoolgirls and those millions of other Europeans similarly seduced. In *The Girls of Slender Means*, evil wears an alluring Schiaparelli dress. In *Jean Brodie*, the heretical Miss Brodie ignores the boring history lessons of the "authorized curriculum" in favor of properly pronounced versions of aesthetic verse or frequently revised stories out of her own sentimentalized past, stories that have nothing to do with "the ordinary world" (24).

Nonetheless, Sandy's movement toward Catholic orthodoxy could not have begun without the positive allure of this kind of heresy, even

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as that "beneficent and enlarging" encounter with Jean Brodie's "Catholic temperament" provides her ultimately with "something to react against" (52). But, as with Newman's reaction to the established church, Sandy's rejection of that heresy is never absolute, but rather evolves as part of a continuous and "developmental" process. The seeds of Brodie's heresy once planted in Sandy unexpectedly take root. Nurtured by Sandy's unique imagination, they develop into the Catholic vision of Sister Helena of the Transfiguration, a name that evokes not only the conversion of Constantine but also his mother's discovery of the True Cross. If Jean Brodie represents "completely unrealized potentialities," as Spark maintains ("Keeping It Short" 412), these potentialities are realized fully in Sandy, for the novel inseparably fuses the rise and fall of Sandy Stranger and Jean Brodie, as well as the progress of Western history. In September 1939, as the war against Hitler begins, Sandy converts to Catholicism and Brodie is discharged from Marcia Blaine. In "the year after the war," Brodie dies, and Sandy, like Brodie reborn and transfigured, enters the convent as Sister Helena and writes a famous book on moral perception.

As a child, Sandy Stranger is drawn to Miss Brodie out of loneliness and fear: Sandy is not a stranger (or herself, if you will) so long as she remains part of Brodie's isolated sect. Although Brodie's clashes with Miss Mackay teach Sandy an important truth, that "people glued together in grown-up authority differ" (17), "group-fright" seizes Sandy whenever she wishes to differ with Miss Brodie and be kind to Mary MacGregor, for "by this action she would separate herself, and be lonely" (46). Sandy's instinct for goodness, however, eventually triumphs, because she leads what she calls "a double life" (32). This "double life" allows her to live both in quotidian reality and, at the same time, in the world of her own imagination. Fed by this imagination, whose rich quality Brodie's lacks (Brodie, after all, expects the beautiful Rose to flower, not "pig-eyed" Sandy), she sees, even as a child, a clear, if innocent, analogy between Brodie's "set" and Mussolini's fascisti (47). Moreover, when, "chin up, up, up," Brodie marches her girls through the Edinburgh slums (32) and urges them all only to "pray for the Unemployed," Sandy is "very frightened." Apprehending the evil of economic deprivation in the analogy of a serpent, she sees the destitute move like "one dragon's body," a "snaky creature" shivering in the cold (60). Like Spark who reports on a similar trip to the slums of Edinburgh (*Curriculum* 46), Sandy learns here another less innocent, but more crucial, truth: Primal evil is not abstract but concrete and tangible, a reality Miss Brodie's first history

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lesson in a snakeless "garden . . . underneath the secure shade of the elm" (17) failed to include.

Because Brodie's imagination never progresses beyond the "aesthetic," she is incapable of considering "the moral" in any form. Although Spark describes Edinburgh's Old Town as a "reeking network of slums" (48), Brodie regards it only as a curious artifact, a place where once "history *had been* lived" [emphasis mine]. She points out that "architecturally speaking, there is no finer sight in Europe" (51). Sure that Hitler's social reorganization would "save the world," Brodie can admit, at tea after the war, only that Hitler was "rather naughty" (179). Sandy's imagination, on the other hand, develops beyond the aesthetic and, ultimately, to the religious. During her last semester with Miss Brodie, she becomes fascinated with the demonstrable facts of concrete and present history: with the details of Miss Brodie's assignation in the art room; and, urging Jenny not to tell Miss Brodie, with the investigative work of "Detective Sergeant Anne Grey," for whom she "quite deserted Alan Breck and Mr. Rochester and all the heroes of fiction" (99) that Brodie has urged upon her. Lacking Sandy's instinct and insight, Miss Brodie uses her imagination only as a distraction, a device either to relieve her boredom or to defend herself from the present and the actual. Unlike Sandy, she cannot resist the allure of mere surface; and, consequently, in spite of her protests that art and religion come first (39), she is, outside Marcia Blaine, a common dilettante who understands neither very well. Incapable or unwilling to confront the reality of evil, and therefore unwilling to engage herself seriously with any objective norm, she would undoubtedly dismiss Newman's saying that the very "essence of all religion is authority and obedience" (*Development* 86) with the same irony she uses to criticize Teddy Lloyd: "He's a Roman Catholic and I don't see how you can have to do with a man who can't think for himself" (180).

Brodie, of course, does not stand still while Sandy develops. The growth of the one so interpenetrates the growth of the other that Sandy wonders "to what extent it was Miss Brodie who had developed complications throughout the years, and to what extent it was her own conception of Miss Brodie that had changed" (175). Spark tells us that "it was not a static Miss Brodie who told her girls, 'These are the years of my prime . . . ' but one whose nature was growing under their eyes, as the girls themselves were under formation." She is quick to add, however, "that the principles governing the end of her prime would have astonished herself at the beginning of it" (65). To use Newman's language, Sandy's movement toward orthodoxy is a "genuine develop-

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ment," while Miss Brodie's growth can only be called a "corruption," the kind of corruption that in the natural world follows upon "prime." Specifically, Newman says that corruption is "the breaking up of life, preparatory to its termination [which] begins when life has reached its perfection, [it] being at the same time the reversal and undoing of what went before" (*Development* 170–71). He adds that "one cause of corruption in religion is the refusal to follow the course of doctrine as it moves on, and an obstinacy in the notions of the past" (177). If Brodie began her prime mindful of her students' welfare, she ends it, like all other political and religious fascists, obsessed with imposing a myth about a fabulous past on a vulnerable present. So variable are Brodie's stories about her youthful beloved, Hugh Carruthers, the Fallen Leaf of Flanders Fields, that even the girls notice that Brodie easily accommodates past facts to serve fancy's present end. Nonetheless, she is determined to fulfill her private fantasy with wounded Teddy Lloyd, even if she must play pander to her favorite girls and send another to a horrible and ironic death.

Yet, as Newman puts it, "the same philosophical elements, received into a certain sensibility or insensibility to sin and its consequences, leads one mind to the Church of Rome; another to what, for want of a better word, may be called Germanism" (*Development* 180). Having learned from Miss Brodie the aesthetics of Catholicism—Giotto, Dante, the Pope, the frighteningly well-ordered Italian and Bavarian "scenes"—Sandy receives these facts through a sensibility alive to the reality of evil and sin, a sensibility that Miss Brodie lacks. Not unlike St. Helena discovering the True Cross, Sandy returns alone not to Jerusalem but to the Old Town where she had had her original vision of primal evil. Here she begins to learn lessons that the heretical curriculum of Miss Brodie omitted: that sin and guilt are real, that God is the ultimate authority, and that the sin of presumption is a "suicidal enchantment" more potent than drink for spinsters, like Miss Brodie, "who could not stand it anymore" (160).

If Sandy ultimately finds the despair of Calvinism "something definite to reject" (159), and the presumption of Miss Brodie "something to react against" (52), she finds a middle way in Teddy Lloyd with whose mind Sandy becomes "deeply absorbed" and from whom she extracts his Roman Catholic religion "as a pith from a husk" (180). Because Brodie dismisses the body in favor of "higher things," she not only persists in her insensitivity to sin, she also confuses respectability with morality: "We must keep our good name" (38). Like her other false prophecies, the "magnificently elevated above the ordinary" (57) affair

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with Teddy that she engineers for the barely pubescent Rose explodes into a triumph for body and fact. The maimed and adulterous body of Teddy Lloyd that Brodie dared not touch becomes, however, the particular means through which Sandy finally recognizes the Catholicism that has been growing inside her. Wounded and sinful like the church itself, Teddy, quite tellingly, also sees as the church has seen since medieval times, interpreting his world in the terms of likeness and difference, those terms that undergird the Scholastics' *analogia entis* itself. Rendering the invisible visible, Teddy's transfiguring art captures both the realistic likeness of the Brodie girls and at the same time the face of Jean Brodie, that absent presence beneath and beyond them that makes them one. In doing so, he shows Sandy another kind of "double life," not the isolating and imaginary life of her childhood but the kind of imagination through which Catholic Christianity understands itself. In it she recognizes a counterpart for her childhood's instinctive longings. Like Spark, she too finds her own authentic voice. Unlike Brodie's, Sandy's development is, therefore, genuine and real. As Newman asserts, "There is no corruption if [a development] retains one and the same type . . . if its beginnings anticipate its subsequent phases . . . if it has a power of assimilation and survival and a vigorous action from first to last" (*Development* 171). Miss Brodie's ancestor Willy died on a gibbet of his own devising; "betrayed" by her student Sandy, Jean Brodie ultimately dies of an "internal growth."

So Sandy enters a cloister, writes a famous book, and we leave her, come to her own prime, clutching "the bars of her grille more desperately than ever" (186). Fully conscious of Miss Brodie and of how easily "corruption" follows upon prime, Sandy anticipates, I suspect, the difficulties of developing into her own future. To say, as Friedman does, that "conversion itself may not 'save' us" (102) suggests that conversion is an isolated, static event rather than the dynamic process that Newman and this novel have described. Moreover, as "retaining one and the same type" is indicative of genuine development, Sandy Stranger's conversion has up to this point satisfied Newman's criteria: Unlike her youthful escapism, Sandy Stranger's development has not left her less a stranger than she was before. Rather it has contextualized the existential reality of exile itself, putting Sandy Stranger in the company of people like Newman who years after his own conversion can say, no less despairingly than Sandy, "Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world" (*Apologia* 319). Reacting against and rejecting the authoritarianism of

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Miss Brodie's fascism, Sandy Stranger enters the Catholic Church and thereby embraces another kind of authority, an authority grounded not in personal power but in a dynamic tradition that, Newman contends, does not tyrannize but rather provokes, in its "never-ending duel" with "private judgement," the warfare that is the necessary condition for the very life of religion. As this same provocative authority once received Sandy into the secure and sectarian life of a convent, so now the same church, in the form of Sandy's religious superiors, requires that she take a further step: to look beyond the shadows of the visiting parlor into the face of the world she was tempted to ignore. As in its own process of continuous conversion, the authority of the Roman Church, hearing the voice of Newman in its Second Vatican Council, rejected as internal heresy the sectarian and antimodern posture of Vatican I, Sandy too is asked by that authority to examine her own temptation to sectarianism that accompanies her own prime. Like her youthful membership in Brodie's *crème de la crème*, the isolation of the cloister has provided her only a temporary shelter, one that she must now reconsider so that the positive and necessary warfare at the heart of genuine conversion may continue. If Sandy has found in the church "quite a number of Fascists much less agreeable than Miss Brodie" (183), Sandy's development up to this point assures us that it is not she who will die of an internal growth, but rather those others who refuse to come to the window, and who like Spark's Salina, have cultivated an "expression of composure," and sit "when they received their rare visitors, well back in the darkness with folded hands" (52).

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History, Biography, and Narrative in Don DeLillo's *Libra*

Glen Thomas

> In the morning I headed west along Main Street in downtown Dallas. I turned right at Houston Street, turned left onto Elm and pressed my hand upon the horn. I kept it there as I drove past the School Book Depository, through Dealey Plaza and beneath the triple underpass. I kept blowing the horn along Stemmons Freeway and out past Parklands Hospital.
>
> —DeLillo, *Americana* 377

Don DeLillo's first novel concludes with the narrator retracing the route of the 1963 Presidential motorcade through the streets of Dallas and on to the hospital where John F. Kennedy was declared dead. DeLillo again retraces this route in his 1988 novel *Libra*, a text that offers a threefold narrative structure: a "biography" of Lee Harvey Oswald; a plot to make an attempt on the life of President Kennedy, which is designed to be a "spectacular miss" (*Libra* 51); and the efforts of the retired secret service agent Nicholas Branch, who is trying to write a secret history of the assassination for the CIA. The novel thus melds historical fact (the events in Dallas in 1963) and fiction (the details of the plot to scare the President into attacking Cuba). Further complicating this structure is the wealth of other texts that surround the assassination itself, all of which strive for the status of being accepted as a factual account of "what really happened." To date, no one account of the Kennedy assassination has achieved definitive status: Gerald Posner estimates that by 1992 over 2,000 books had been written about the assassination (ix). *Libra* is therefore one more text in this continually proliferating chain of texts surrounding an event characterized by indeterminacy and dispute.

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Barbie Zelitzer argues that the assassination narrative is characterized by an "absence of closure" (105). Since the publication of the Warren Commission Report in 1964, the official account of Kennedy's death has been regarded with suspicion. Within months of the publication of the 26-volume report, articles critical of its findings began appearing in mainstream media outlets such as *Esquire* and the *New Republic*: "[By] the end of the decade, the critics had aired conspiracy theories involving pro-Castro and anti-Castro proponents; the Dallas police; the CIA, FBI, and Secret Service; organized crime; Texas right-wingers; and oil magnates" (Zelitzer 107). It may be argued then that a number of oppositional histories quickly arose in response to the official version. Subsequent events in American political history, most notably the Watergate scandal, prompted an increased distrust of official explanations. By the end of the 1970s, public doubt over the findings of the Warren Commission persuaded Congress to reopen the assassination in the form of the House Select Committee on Assassinations (Zelitzer 117). The major finding of this committee was that President Kennedy's death was the result of a conspiracy, although no names or organizations were offered as the culprits. The revaluations of the assassination continued throughout the 1980s and culminated (to date, at least) in the 1991 release of Oliver Stone's *JFK*. Stone claimed to be "acting as historian in retelling the story of Kennedy's death" (Zelitzer 202), a statement that complicates the boundaries between conventional demarcations of fact and fiction. In Stone's film, as in *Libra*, the distinction between the two categories is disrupted, so that the historical record becomes another form of fiction (which resulted, in part, in both DeLillo and Stone being accused of distortion, bias, and plain lies in their respective representations of the Kennedy assassination).[1]

Libra asserts that Oswald did not act alone and that there was a conspiracy.[2] The novel may be read in the light of textualist theories of history, in that *Libra* refuses to see the historical record as a fixed or stable entity but instead as the product of interpretation. Hayden White argues that history is always and nothing more than a narrative construction: "Confronted with a chaos of 'facts' the historian must 'choose, sever and carve them up' for narrative purposes" (*Tropics* 55). Traditional forms of history find their coherence in narrative structure, a chronological form with a beginning, middle, and end, unencumbered by questions regarding the suitability of such a form (see White, *Content* 31, for a discussion of those who simply "practice" history). *Libra* challenges this historical form by suggesting that random actions

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and the workings of chance will connect and collide with each other in a way that cannot be anticipated or adequately explained, in what is almost a chaos theory of history. It is this randomness that prevents Nicholas Branch from actually writing his projected history, as from his perspective there is no orderly pattern of events that culminated in the assassination. Instead, as will be discussed, the information available refuses to coalesce and remains stubbornly fragmentary.

This element of randomness impinges upon the "false" assassination attempt. Win Everett, the instigator of the plot, creates the assassination attempt as "an electrifying event" that will "excite and shock the [Cuban] exile community, the whole country. . . . We want to set up an event that will make it appear [Cuban intelligence has] struck at the very heart of our government" (27). The projected result of this "spectacular miss" is that public outcry will force the administration to invade and conquer Cuba; Everett's plan has its origins in the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961, which led to his dismissal from the CIA. The plan thus has its roots in the past, so that the attempted assassination (and in the original plan it is always an attempt that is designed to fail) will prompt revision of the past; the future event as planned by Everett will direct attention to the past and provoke a counteraction to previous failure. Contingent upon the success of the plan is the creation of a single figure, "a name, a face, a bodily frame they might use to extend their fiction into the real world" (50). This is an identity Everett will construct, built from a series of documents and traces, who will be "slightly more visible than all the others, a man the investigation might centre on, someone who might be trailed and possibly apprehended" (50).

Everett in this sense becomes the author of a script, devising a plot or narrative that is to lead to a specific conclusion. The plot is manufactured through documents, letters, and credit cards, a conglomeration of textual traces that will construct a certain character visible to those who seek to explain the anticipated events. Everett refers to the creation of this narrative as the "life-insight, the life secret" (28) he has sought throughout his life, "the condition we have always wanted to reach" (29). Everett's desire is, in essence, the desire to be the author of his own plot or narrative, to create characters and actions of his own devising. The plotters seek to construct their own fiction and place it in the "real world" and thus disguise their own involvement: Fiction becomes real and disguises a (somehow) deeper reality.

Yet Everett is not the sole creator of the plan: "This plan speaks to something deep inside me. It has a powerful logic. I've felt it unfolding for weeks, like a dream whose meaning slowly becomes apparent" (28).

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The plot is therefore simultaneously Everett's and yet not his; it "speaks to him" in a voice of its own, and its meaning only "slowly becomes apparent" as in a dream, which indicates, perhaps, that the plot itself is generated outside of and separate from Everett, somehow simultaneously his and yet not his. The meaning, or coherence, is not self-evident from its inception, but a process of gradual realization that must be confined to some form of narrative. The meaning Everett finds in his plan must be actively created and constructed in the process of its unfolding. Everett's projected narrative logic is itself questioned by the novel (and the events of history themselves), in that the President is not the victim of a "spectacular miss" but instead a dead hit, and Cuba is not retaken for the United States. The "deep logic" of the plan comes unstuck, disrupted by the actions of a more unstable history, "representative of the very instability [DeLillo's] fiction portrays as the generalized context of the postmodern condition" (Carmichael 204). Everett's plan is destabilized by the plot's logic, which he is at once aware of and yet unable to control, the logic of movement toward death:

> Plots carry their own logic. There is a tendency of plots to move toward death. [Everett] believed that the idea of death is woven into the nature of every plot. A narrative plot is no less than a conspiracy of armed men. The tighter the plot of a story, the more likely it will end in death. . . . He had a foreboding that the plot would move to a limit, develop its logical end. (221)

This logic exemplifies the split between the creator of the plot and its outcome. Although Everett plans that only a Secret Service agent should be hit and not the President, the plot's logic takes over and concludes with the death of the President. Everett is demonstrably unable to control what he believes is his own creation, so that the narrative he plans slips from his grasp and becomes self-creating and generates its own momentum. The plot's impulse toward death, its logical end, is one of the preconditions of narrative itself; "[t]he desire of the text (the desire of reading) is hence desire for the end" (Brooks 104). The plot precedes the projected narrative, as it is the plot that "is the very organizing line, the thread of design, that makes narrative possible because finite and comprehensible" (Brooks 4). The conspirators initiate a plot and thus find themselves imbricated within the logic of plotting and the drive toward death. Thus, once the plot is initiated, its beginnings presuppose its ending in death, which is obviously the case here, although it is worth noting that *Libra*'s conclusion is complicated by the double deaths of Kennedy and Oswald.

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Libra is in one sense a fictionalized biography of Oswald, detailing his childhood, Marine service, defection to the Soviet Union, attempted assassination of General Edwin Walker, and finally his involvement in the deed for which he is best known. Throughout the novel, Oswald is persistently depicted as an outsider in whatever society he moves: As an adolescent in the Bronx, he is ridiculed for his Southern accent; in New Orleans, he is beaten up for speaking like a Northerner. Even in this relatively small detail, Oswald is marked as one who is the victim of a form of linguistic alienation. In the Marines, he takes the foreign-language qualification test "just to see if he'd get noticed," and is rated "P for poor throughout" (163). The sections from Oswald's *Historic Diary* (as he referred to it, reproduced from Warren Commission exhibits) of his time in Russia are especially notable for their linguistic chaos:

> I explaine I am a communist, ect. She is politly sym. but uneasy now. (150)
>
> I decide to end it. Soak rist in cold water to numb the pain. (151)
>
> My fondes dreams are shattered. (152)

Oswald's "About the Author" sketch for his essay "The Kollective" contains further disarray: He describes himself as the son of an insurance salesman whose early death "left a far mean streak of indepence brought on by negleck" (213). The tests run by the Soviet officials on Oswald reveal that he suffers from "some form of dyslexia or word-blindness" (166), suggesting that Oswald is barred from the written word. He is continually frustrated in his attempts to place himself within discourse and to find the conventional form or meaning for his words. Oswald thus finds himself as a subject who "loses his meaning in the objectifications of discourse" (Lacan 70) within the symbolic order. In the same passage, Lacan adds that the "most profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization" is encountered when "the subject begins to talk to us about himself" (70). It is therefore at the very moment of writing that Oswald's linguistic alienation is at its most apparent. In the light of Lacan's analysis, his statement that this most profound moment of alienation occurs when the subject discusses itself is particularly pertinent in that in the *Historic Diary* Oswald discourses upon himself (in the form of a conventional diary entry) and, in doing so, finds his discussion imbricated within what Lacan terms "the discourse of the other" (Lacan 69), in this case the voice of Hidell.

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Both the addresser and addressee of this discourse are split, and this, in conjunction with Oswald's linguistic deficiencies, draws attention to the discursive structures that construct character. Oswald's *Diary* is marked by a split in the narrating subject, so that Oswald himself becomes both subject and object of the entries. When he attempts suicide in Russia, for example, he details the projected moment of his demise as if it were a scene from a play: "Somewhere a violin plays, as I watch my life whirl away" (152). In this instance, Oswald has become addresser and addressee of the discourse, writing his life and simultaneously watching it "whirl away," marking a disjunction between the *énoncé* and the *énonciation*, as Oswald watches himself die. When writing the *Diary,* Oswald writes in the voice of Hidell, "theatrical, self-mocking" (211), hence the addition of the violin, a virtual stage direction. Hidell, however, is an alias for Oswald, a product of language games:

> Take the double-*e* from Lee.
> Hide the double-*l* in Hidell.
> Hidell means hide the *L*.
> Don't tell. (90)

In "hiding the *L*," Hidell is a disguise for Lee. Throughout the text there are interchangeable references to Lee and Hidell, thus splitting the signifier: The collection of character attributes that is the subject of the biographical discourse is identified as both "Lee" and "Hidell" (as, for example, in "Hidell creeps closer to the East" [134]). Sections of the *Historic Diary* are written in the "voice of Hidell" to distinguish them from Oswald's voice. Oswald is therefore split and dispersed, simultaneously occupying multiple enunciative sites. Hidell is linked with history, which "mean[s] to merge. The purpose of history is to climb out of your own skin. . . . We live forever in history, outside ego and id. [Lee] wasn't sure he knew exactly what the id was but he knew it lay hidden in Hidell" (101). In this scheme of ego and id, Oswald and Hidell, it may be theorized that Oswald is the locus of the ego, and H*id*ell the id. Hidell may therefore be read as representing the unconscious, or the discourse of the other, given that the emphasis is on hiding and concealment, something of which Oswald is aware but unable to know. The goal of history is to transcend such divisions and move "out of the dark night of the isolated self" (101), to merge ego and id, self and the world. The novel's epigraph, taken from one of Oswald's letters to his brother, exemplifies this desire: "Happiness is taking part in the struggle, where there is no borderline between one's own personal world and the world in general." To achieve this goal,

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however, would require a transcendent unity or oneness that the novel suggests (in the representation of Oswald) is impossible to achieve. The insistent splitting of Oswald and the conspirators (in their code names and aliases, and the motivating force behind the plot itself) implies that unity of character and purpose is illusory, denying the possibility of transcendent unity and always insisting instead on the subject's fragmentary discursive position. It is noteworthy that other conceptions of history (or destiny) represented within the novel are similarly predicated on ideas of splitting and dispersal. Oswald's interpretation of Marxism echoes the novel's epigraph: "[Oswald] thought the only end to isolation was to reach the point where he was no longer separated from the true struggles that went on around him. The name we give to this point is history" (248). Becoming part of the "struggle" entails, therefore, a surrendering of the subject position and a melding of the self with the world at large (and therefore an end to the isolation Oswald perceives). In this formulation, the subject's status as an individual is problematized; self and world become one, so that in effect the subject ceases to be distinguishable from what occurs in the world around the subject.

The question of "destiny" is a feature of the novel's title: Oswald is a Libran, itself a sign of doubling. David Ferrie explains that there are two varieties of Libran, the positive who

> has achieved self-mastery. He is well-balanced, level headed, a sensible fellow respected by all. We have the negative Libran who is, let's say, somewhat unsteady and impulsive. Easily, easily, easily influenced. Poised to make the dangerous leap. Either way, balance is the key. (315)

Oswald's is thus marked as a split sign, a product of doubling and uncertainty. In terms of the linguistic structures within which Oswald is constructed and the forms of historical understanding to which he subscribes, his "sign" (signifier, historical or astrological) is insistently characterized as dispersed, split, and fragmented. This is evident in Oswald/Hidell's *Diary*, which is not only for Oswald but also for the reader he envisages will follow and "understand the fears and aspirations of a man who only wanted to see for [himself] what socialism was like" (211). The reader is thus the addressee of this discourse and, due to the split in Oswald's consciousness (as addresser and addressee), occupies the position of Oswald/reader who reads Oswald reading. In a sense then, Oswald's dispersed subjectivity includes the reader's position. Oswald and the reader merge at the moment of reading, so that the very act of reading becomes another of Oswald's enunciative sites.

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As Oswald writes on in his *Diary*, he is unable to find "order in the field of little symbols. They were in the hazy distance. He could not see clearly the picture that is called a word" (211). Oswald is thus always frustrated by language, which "tricked him with inconsistencies. He watched sentences deteriorate, powerless to make them right. The nature of things was to be elusive. . . . He could not get a grip on the runaway world" (211).

Due to his difficulties with language, Oswald feels that he is somehow exiled from the real world. It is his repeated desire to gain access to the codes and knowledge that he feels will mark him as a participant in this real world, and concomitant with that, his desire to be a figure in history. Oswald's perceived alienation from history and the world is a result of his inability to read; his isolation is symbolized in the text by his repeated confinement in small rooms, usually engaged in some form of writing or plotting (his *Diary* or the plan of the assassination of General Walker).[3] Oswald casts himself as the protagonist of such texts, seeking to create a narrative, a "design, a network of connections" (277) that will culminate in the published diary or the death of Walker and Oswald's photograph on the cover of *Time* magazine.

These plans are designed to give Oswald an identity, to make him a figure with a place in history. The identity he seeks to create, however, is one that is mass produced by media outlets such as *Time*. Oswald's final, real identity would thus be transmitted everywhere at once, so that the authentic Oswald would be the media-created Oswald, the "Castro partisan with his guns and subversive journals" (281) he uses as props in what are now well-known photographs.[4] Oswald's desire to see multiple representations of his image has its apotheosis just prior to the assassination, when on seeing guns in the Texas School Book Depository Oswald is not surprised, as "[i]t was all about him. Everything that happened was him" (385). Oswald occupies the position of Baudrillard's schizophrenic, devoid of a "halo of private protection, not even his own body," and characterized by

> less the loss of the real, the light years of estrangement from the real, [but] the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defense. . . . It is the end of interiority and intimacy, the overexposure and transparence of the world which traverses him without obstacle. He can no longer produce the limits of his own being. (Baudrillard 132–33)

The split in Oswald's subjectivity is exemplified at the end of the novel when he is shot by Jack Ruby. Oswald's death is broadcast on tele-

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vision, in itself a medium of simulations and images. Earlier in the novel, Marina Oswald's ignorance of television functions to draw attention to the medium. When she and Lee walk past a department store with television screens in the window, she sees herself, in "the world gone inside out" (227).

> She turned and looked at the people, checking to see if they were the same as the ones in the window. They had to be the same but she was compelled to look. . . . She looked at June and Lee in the window, then turned to see them on the sidewalk. (227)

As in the case of Oswald's *Diary*, the medium here splits the subject in two, so that the observer is also the one observed. Beryl Parmenter watches as Oswald is shot and sees

> [t]here was something in Oswald's face, a glance at the camera before he was shot, that put him here in the audience among the rest of us, sleepless in our homes—a glance, a way of telling us that he knows who we are and how we feel, that he has brought our perceptions and interpretations into his sense of the crime. Something in the look . . . tells us that he is outside the moment, watching with the rest of us . . . he is commenting on the documentary footage even as he is being shot. Then he himself is shot, and shot, and shot, and the look becomes another kind of knowledge. But he has made us part of his dying. (447)

The text plays ironically with the discourse of filmmaking, in the double use of the word *shot,* and as in the suicide in Russia, Oswald is both viewer and victim in this last performance. After he is shot, Oswald is watching himself on television: "He watched in a darkish room, someone's TV den" (440). In *White Noise*, Jack Gladney notes that

> it is when death is rendered graphically, is televised so to speak, that you sense an eerie separation between your condition and yourself. A network of symbols has been introduced, an entire awesome technology wrested from the gods. It makes you feel a stranger in your own dying. (DeLillo, *Noise* 142)

This is the condition Oswald has attained, in that his death is televised and he becomes, in the process, a "stranger" in the whole affair, split from himself and observing the moment on television. Oswald, in this scene, is both "us" and "him," suggesting that the watching audience is both part of his crime and his death, thus sharing the alienation Oswald has experienced throughout the novel.

Frank Lentricchia argues, in relation to this passage, that Oswald's death transforms him from the first-person "I" into "'I' who would be 'he' or 'she'" ("*Libra*" 195). This transition, from the first person to the

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third, achieved through video representation on television, is not only self-making in the third person, as Lentricchia elegantly argues, but is also characterized by the use of the first-person plural: Oswald's look at the camera informs viewers he knows who "we" are and that "our perceptions and interpretations" are his as well. It is therefore not just a straightforward move from the first person to the third, but a process of transition that occurs through the first-person plural and the second person. As in his *Historic Diary* entry of his earlier "death," Oswald is both "I" and "you" as he watches himself. Not only then does Oswald inhabit multiple enunciative sites, but also his perspective of these sites are similarly diffuse: He shifts between "I," "you" and "s/he." This further complicates the structure of the novel, as to the reader Oswald has almost always been "he," yet at the moment of his death he changes from "he" to "we." At the moment of his dying, Oswald becomes the reader watching the drama as it unfolds, and the reader is linked with Oswald through the use of the first-person pronoun: "he" is also "we." The shifts in the pronoun suggest that Oswald as a subject is continually caught in a *process*, so that there is no one preferred subject position. Lentricchia's analysis implies that the third person is the endpoint, the goal of this version of American self-making, but in Oswald's case there is no end to this series of shifting positions.

It is worth noting that the perceptions of Oswald's shooting are conveyed through Beryl Parmenter, who uses the news media as a means of communication with her friends, clipping stories from newspapers and posting them away.

> She believed no message she could send a friend was more intimate and telling than a story in the paper about a violent act, a crazed man, a bombed Negro home, a Buddhist monk who set himself on fire. Because these are the things that tell us how we live. (261)

Oswald's shooting, however, broadcast on television, is different from these clippings. Beryl feels that these are pictures "from the other world . . . and it was not at all like the news items she clipped and mailed to friends" (446). Oswald's shooting, therefore, does not tell others "how we live" as the other news items do; instead, the shooting is a communication from the "other world." The world Oswald has entered in his death is one of the sign as spectacle, the death of the subject that is characterized by repetition (Oswald "is shot, and shot, and shot") and doubling. Oswald's televisual death thus marks the dissolution of the final boundary of the self, and itself "becomes part of the precession of simulacra" (Wilcox 353). Oswald's death becomes a

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link in the chain of simulacra as it has already been represented in the text in *Suddenly*, a film Oswald watches on television (369). In this film, Frank Sinatra is "a combat veteran who comes to a small town . . . to assassinate the President" (369). Before he can do so, however, Sinatra is shot, his death marking the narrative climax of the film. *Suddenly*, therefore, simulates what is to happen to Oswald, who becomes an assassin shot on television. While watching the film, Oswald feels "connected to the events on the screen. It was like secret instructions entering the network of signals and broadcast bands, the whole busy air of transmission" (370). Oswald is thus placed, by these "secret instructions" emanating from the screen, into a network of simulacra, and in his televised death, assumes the place of the murdered assassin.[5] Sinatra's death in *Suddenly* is doubly televisual, in that his plan fails when law-enforcement characters held hostage electrify the metal table to which the rifle is bolted with a current from the television. When an ex-FBI agent spills water on the floor, the circuit is completed, and Sinatra's accomplice is electrocuted while Sinatra himself is shot in the ensuing confusion. Television becomes the locus of death, yet the very fact that this death is telecast means that death may be played and replayed.

Oswald's death too is in a sense not final, but continually replayed, so that the possibility of death as a terminal state for the subject is removed, given that Oswald at his death is depicted as outside the moment and among the viewers. The subject's dispersal ensures that its death will continue to recur on television, and, in a sense, will never occur. Oswald is therefore dead and yet not dead, depicted as watching the spectacle of himself dying, so that death is not a metaphysical epiphany but another locus of dispersal and doubling. The representative strategies on which Beryl relied in the past, the news clippings as an index of herself, are no longer stable and representational images of an anterior referent. As Jack Gladney notes in *White Noise*, "dying cures us of our innocence of the future" (15), yet Beryl's distress at Oswald's death is a recognition of the loss of the idea that death, in a somewhat clichéd argument, is what gives life meaning. As Benjamin argues, "man's life first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death" (qtd. in Brooks 95). Oswald's death is indeed "transmissible," but in the transmission on television this certainty disappears. In Oswald's multiple deaths, a more stable form of meaning has been lost, and texts that in the past offered Beryl a form of communication of meaning are no longer viable or relevant. "The 'delirium' of communication, the arbitrary sign's rapturous loss of referent, and the flow of desire in late capitalism erode a sense of temporal continuity, history, limits, and

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endings—death included" (Wilcox 362). Oswald simultaneously being inside and outside the moment of his dying disrupts the limits of subjectivity. As the depiction of Oswald throughout the text has shown, the emptying out of the self is produced by the instruments of Western capitalism: magazines, newspapers, and television. What Beryl Parmenter is observing is a dissolution of the boundaries between the self and the world.[6] The distinction between public and private spaces collapses, the

> opposition is effaced in a sort of obscenity where the most intimate processes of our life become the virtual feeding ground of the media; [here the] private sphere itself . . . is no longer a scene where the dramatic interiority of the subject, engaged with its objects as with its image, is played out. (Baudrillard 128)

The narrative momentum toward death is no longer accompanied by the epiphanic illumination of the "'authority' of the tale, . . . the knowledge of death which in our own lives is denied to us" (Brooks 95), but instead Oswald's televisual death offers the "world gone inside out" as it was for Marina.

Oswald is further dispersed throughout the narrative in the ways in which others become him: After shooting Oswald, Jack Ruby believes he is "cast as someone else, as Oswald. They are part of the same crime now" (444). Ruby begins to "merge with Oswald. He can't tell the difference between them. . . . Jack Ruby has stopped being the man who killed the President's assassin. He is the man who killed the President" (445). Ruby becomes Oswald, and Oswald is thus further decentered. In the act of killing the President, Oswald has already become John Kennedy: "He and Kennedy were partners. The figure of the gunman in the window was inextricable from the victim and his history" (435). As Oswald is about to die, he becomes Francis Gary Powers, the U-2 pilot shot down over the Soviet Union: "It is the white nightmare of noon, high in the sky over Russia. Mee-too and you-too. He is a stranger in a mask, falling" (440). Oswald is clearly dispersed, in the multiple identifications he takes and in those who are identified with him. The subject is therefore not some form of stable entity but is both me and you, too. The subject has become a sign, infinitely iterable, able to be "put between quotation marks; in doing so it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida, "Signature" 185). Composed of signs and traces that are transmissible, the subject thus takes on the characteristics of language itself, a purely linguistic entity not anchored to a fixed referent. In this way the sign may be doubled

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and displaced, the product of absences and the impossibility of closure or terminus. It is characteristics such as these that define Oswald throughout the text, in the ways in which he is repeatedly positioned within a series of discourses and plots. Oswald as a sign becomes infinitely iterable, and the referent is marked by an absence, a lack of proximity, as for example when Marina feels that Lee is "someone you see from a distance," a figure who "was never fully there" (241). This distance, a form of absence in that the sign is not wholly present but at a remove, Marina believes will be overcome when she learns English (242), yet this link between Oswald's absence and language suggests that it is language itself that produces the "distance."

Roland Barthes argues that

> the effacement . . . of narration in contemporary historical science, which prefers to speak of structures rather than chronologies, implies much more than a simple change of school: a veritable ideological transformation; historical narration is dying because the sign of History is not so much the *real* as the *intelligible.* (140)

It is upon this crux that the construction of the assassination and the constructed figure of the assassin rests; it is not so much that a *real* gunman exists but that the conspirators create one and make such a figure *intelligible* to investigators. The plot and its creators will thus be effaced by the structure created; rather than "dying," as Barthes suggests, in this case the historical narrative (the motivation for the assassination) is being concealed by the imposition of a created, intelligible structure. History will thus appear to "tell itself," predicated on a discourse that is characterized by "a systematic absence of any sign referring to the sender of the historical message" (Barthes 131). Hence Everett's elaborate creation of a structure or framework around the figure of the assassin:

> putting together a man with scissors and tape [who would] emerge and vanish in a maze of false names. Investigators would find an application for a post office box; a certificate of service, U.S. Marine Corps; a Social Security card; a passport application; a driver's license; a stolen credit card and half a dozen other documents in two or three different names, each leading to a trail that would end at the Cuban Intelligence Directorate. (145)

Through such documents, Everett creates a structure out of a collection of texts and traces that will be intelligible to putative investigators and ensure that they are able to place the assassin in a framework that has been mapped out in advance. The traces supplied are purely textual, so

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that the figure created becomes a predetermined position within discourse that Oswald is to occupy. In this sense, Barthes's formulation of the shift in historical science is an apt model for the plot to scare the President, but Everett ensures that the character he creates is real through the addition of "coincidence. A lingering mystery" (147). Paradoxically, the absence of a discernible structure, in the form of coincidence, is the guarantee of a "reality effect," so that with reference to Barthes's argument, both structure and narrative are confounded in the attempt to explain the coincidences of the text. In coincidence, the "'real' and its expression apparently confront each other" (Barthes 139) and thus produce a situation where a disjunction between these two aspects of the text appears irreducible. When the expression of the real cannot account for the convergence of two (or more) events deemed to be notable, the conjunction is thought to be coincidental.

The major coincidence of *Libra* is that the created gunman is an almost perfect match for Lee Oswald. This coincidence returns to Everett's contention that coincidence is what makes the plot appear real, that added touch of mystery which is not readily explicable. *Libra* may thus be read as self-referential, as the text creates a series of coincidences that the chief conspirator/plotter believes to be the stamp of realism. Coincidence is perhaps a form of deeper structure of which the subject (and perhaps the text) is unaware. This deeper form of structure, however, is never named within the novel, only described as something that is outside the control of the actions of the characters. A structure that cannot be discerned thus functions to deprive the assassination of its intended meaning. While the conspirators see the assassination attempt as a means toward a particular goal, this is overturned when, firstly, the assassination succeeds when it should not have done so, and, secondly, when the projected exposure of the Cuban Intelligence Directorate does not take place.

The assassination is therefore emptied of its anticipated significance and becomes what the official version would have it to be: the act of an unstable loner. The seemingly random pattern of coincidence, therefore, produces an event that is at once unintelligible and at the same time the site of multiple meanings and interpretations. History as a narrative form becomes unstable at the moment of the assassination, as there is no discernible plot structure within which it can be contained and thereby be accorded some form of meaning. The assassination becomes the site of contest and uncertainty as the narratives about this one event proliferate and continue to dispute each other and attempt to gain acceptance in popular consciousness. The assassination

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as a text is unreadable and yet infinitely explicable. There is a wealth of detail and no resolution.

Branch's attempted history of the assassination, which he appears destined never to write, offers a metacommentary on the narrative of the assassination itself and, more generally, the writing of history. Surrounded by an ever-increasing amount of data, Branch finds it impossible to produce an assassination narrative that will fit all the information available to him. He believes it is "essential to master the data" (442), yet the accumulation of these data defeats the attempt at writing, simply because there is so much of it. The sheer mass of documents and Branch's inability to "master" them point to the fact that historical events are only known through texts. This is not to say that certain events did not occur, but that knowledge of the past is only transmitted or experienced through textual productions: photographs, eyewitness accounts, testimony. The evidence Branch reviews suggests the instability of the historical referent:

> Oswald's eyes are gray, they are blue, they are brown. He is five feet nine, five feet ten, five feet eleven. He is right handed, he is left handed. He drives a car, he does not. He is a crack shot and a dud. Branch has support for all these propositions in eyewitness testimony and exhibits. (300)

The lack of certainty regarding Oswald's more basic physical attributes highlights the chaos of the record and the associated task of the historian of the selection and arrangement of the "facts" as they appear. Branch does not feel capable of taking this step, as "the data keeps coming. Because new lives enter the record all the time. The past is changing as he writes" (301). The past is therefore not a hermetically sealed entity, awaiting the arrival of the historian to simply "tell what has occurred," but an ever-changing construct whose traces and definitions are unstable. The official record, the Warren Commission Report, is no more than a form of fiction, "the megaton novel James Joyce would have written if he'd moved to Iowa City and lived to be a hundred" (181), the "novel in which nothing is left out" (182). History becomes a fiction of minute detail and rambling narrative that ultimately for Branch reveals nothing. As White argues, history is a set of "verbal fictions" (*Tropics* 82) constituted into a narrative by "the suppression or subordination of certain [events] and the highlighting of others" (84). For Branch, however, all the details are equally relevant, so there can be no selection of detail and the encoding of these details into a specific narrative. Everything is said and nothing is concluded, as it is in the process of constructing a narrative that

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meaning is created. Without a narrative structure, the assassination will remain another event in a series of events, no more and no less significant than others in a chronicle.

Branch's methodology of history, the accumulation and eventual assimilation of all the facts available, which will presumably "tell the story" of the assassination, demonstrates the limitations of an empiricist historiography. The "empiricist prejudice is attended by a conviction that 'reality' is not only perceivable but also coherent in its structure" (White, *Tropics* 122). Branch has come to realize that the reality he seeks to chronicle is not coherent, exemplified in his reference to the Warren Commission Report as a Joycean novel; he refuses to attempt to coalesce his data into a narrative form, and presumably will never do so, because the narrative will never be complete: "There are important things he has yet to learn" (442), important things that the Curator continues to provide.

The authoritative metahistory of the assassination will therefore never be written; there can be no final word on this event, as Branch's position shows: The data keep coming, the texts multiply, theories are continually propounded. There cannot be a definitive master text of the assassination, as all texts produced are imbricated within other texts.[7] Branch's attempted history of the assassination offers an ironic commentary on the production of *Libra* itself. In contrast to Branch's wealth of detail, the text of the novel does select and highlight specific characters and actions; yet even in doing so, the anticipated significance of the assassination is not revealed. White argues that there is "a certain necessity in the relationship between the narrative . . . and the representation of specifically historical events," in that the understanding of "human actions" that are structured as narrative texts "depends upon our being able to reproduce the process by which they were produced, that is, to narrativize these actions" (*Content* 54). If, however, the attempt to narrativize these actions fails, and produces instead a narrative structure based on coincidence rather than a narrative of the process of production, then some of the certainties implicit in White's statement become problematic. Coincidence, based on the absence of causality, would defy an attempt to *reproduce* the processes by which the situation under analysis came about. As in Barthes's formulation (139), when the "'real' and its expression [in narrative form] apparently confront each other," coincidence creates an aporia within the narrative; historical discourse is therefore left to assert "*this happened*" (Barthes 139), an assertion marked by its lack of causality. *Libra*, then, demonstrates the limits of such a theory of history predicated on narrative, but paradoxi-

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cally is itself reliant on narrative and coincidence. *Libra* implies that in the end there are only narratives and their attendant structures; in the representations of Everett's and Branch's respective attempts at constructing narrative, each in their different ways a failure, the text suggests that control over and knowledge of events is never absolute. This is a realization on which the text is predicated: In the indeterminacy over the assassination, the "why" and the "who" are never entirely clear; only the textual traces of the fact remain, and the efforts to understand them, to incorporate them into discourse, are themselves provisional, doubtful, and ultimately contradictory.

NOTES

[1] For an examination of this point, see Frank Lentricchia's "The American Writer as Bad Citizen."

[2] It may well be going too far to assert that *Libra* is running counter to official history, as it has become clear that there is no official history of the assassination, but instead a series of claims and counterclaims without any sense of resolution. It is, however, interesting to note that President Clinton was quoted in early 1994 as believing Oswald acted alone and that there was no conspiracy involved.

[3] It is perhaps worth noting that Oswald's plots tend to go awry: The *Diary* is marked by its linguistic chaos, and the assassination attempt on General Walker is also a somewhat muddled affair, firstly in that Oswald mistakes the date he has set, and secondly, in the simple fact that Oswald misses his target.

[4] These photographs of Oswald have been the subject of much debate stemming from accusations that the photographs are in fact forgeries, with Oswald's head pasted on top of another person's body. It is arguable that *Libra* is ironically playing with the reader's knowledge of this debate, implying that what Oswald hopes will represent himself as he is to the world has been seen as a fake, engineered to implicate him in the assassination of Kennedy.

[5] Oswald's death also conforms to the logic of *Suddenly,* in that the "good" characters in the film attempt to dissuade Sinatra from carrying out his plan on the basis that no one who assassinated a President in the past has ever "made it," namely, lived long enough to take pride in or profit from their actions. In this sense, then, Oswald will join the line of Presidential assassins who died for their actions.

[6] Debord's discussion of the role of the spectacle is of note here, in that he argues that the subject who "passively accepts his alien daily fate" of the dissolution of the "boundaries between self and world" is pushed toward madness that is characterized by "resorting to magical techniques," namely, the "acceptance and consumption of commodities" that emblematize a "communication without response" (Debord 219). This is a most suggestive argument given that the communication strategies Beryl Parmenter is so fond of involve not only the consumption of commodities, such as magazines and newspapers, but also that the televised shooting is emblematic of this form of "communication without response."

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[7] An example of this is Posner's *Case Closed,* which, as its title indicates, sets itself up as the final work on the assassination. Much of the text attempts to refute other texts that preceded it, then concludes that Oswald alone was responsible—the original verdict of the Warren Commission. Thus the original verdict, which provoked the conspiracy theories, becomes the latest verdict in the series. And on it goes.

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Miniaturization and Anticlimax in Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour*

Steven Trout

Although Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* has drawn high praise from a number of influential critics—especially Anthony Burgess (56–58), Andrew Rutherford (113–34), and Bernard Bergonzi (116–19)—the trilogy has slipped in and out of print since the 1960s, its stature as Waugh's magnum opus eclipsed by the steady popularity of earlier works such as *A Handful of Dust* and *Brideshead Revisited*. Thus, the recent addition of *Sword of Honour* to the Knopf Everyman's Library, a gesture that marks the trilogy's belated recognition as a twentieth-century classic and (one hopes) its now permanent availability in print,[1] calls for a reexamination of what Andrew Rutherford, speaking for many readers, has called "probably the greatest work of fiction to emerge from the Second World War" (113).

Underlying most of the critical commentary that the trilogy has attracted to date is an assumption that I intend, in the following discussion, to modify: namely, that *Sword of Honour*, like the more openly nostalgic and sentimental *Brideshead Revisited*, constitutes an almost complete departure from the manic farce in Waugh's early fiction. The trilogy, critics have generally agreed, represents Waugh in a more somber, morally engaged, and forthrightly Catholic phase. Here, the author no longer presents bizarre or grotesque situations from a seemingly detached perspective (as in, for example, *A Handful of Dust)* but adopts fiction as, one could say, a "sword of honour," as a means of openly attacking the modern age and explicitly asserting an alternative set of values. In *The Ironic World of Evelyn Waugh* (1992), Frederick L. Beaty has refined this contrast between Waugh's fiction of the 1930s and his later work. Distinguishing between irony, which, in Harold Bloom's words, "undermines clarities [and] opens up vistas of chaos," and satire, which

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supposedly posits a discernable moral position, Beaty characterizes the novels prior to *Brideshead* as the work of a master ironist, who "stands apart from his creation[s] virtually to the extent of being an amoral observer" (29–30). The later novels, on the other hand, are works of satire that merely use "traces" of "irony as a technical device." Their "dominant world view is no longer ironic" (9).

I essentially agree that *Sword of Honour* offers, in Beaty's terms, a satirical vision of World War II. However, Waugh's use of irony—even as a so-called "technical device"—in this later work seems to me much more intricate and extensive than generally recognized. And, while subdued in comparison with Waugh's novels of the 30s, the trilogy does present more than a few "vistas of chaos," as Waugh's restless irony turns from target to target, at times threatening to subsume the entire world into its vision of futility and betrayal. Critical analyses of the trilogy have tended, up to this point, to examine the text primarily in terms of plot and character development.[2] I would like to take a different approach and to explore the issue of irony in *Sword of Honour* in two specific areas: language, considered here both as a medium and as a subject of the narration, and setting, or, more specifically, Waugh's presentation of physical space. What ultimately emerges from this less linear and less plot-bound consideration is the recognition that the trilogy not only attacks modern warfare (and midcentury English culture) with more pervasive irony than previously suspected, but also lampoons war fiction itself, subverting every imaginable convention. An examination of language and setting also suggests the myriad ways in which the trilogy undermines its own seemingly expansive structure, continually collapsing inward to form an anti-epic—the perfect form, as it turns out, for the protagonist's painful journey toward the renunciation of violence and "just" military causes.

Central to my reading is the assertion that *Sword of Honour* engages the reader, on many different levels, in a recurring—and perversely compelling—cycle of raised expectation and disappointment. On the level of plot, this pattern is obvious enough. We see, for example, that Waugh has filled the trilogy with false alarms and false starts, from the rumors of a German landing on the British coast—a contingency enthusiastically prepared for by the Halberdiers in vol. 1 (especially by Apthorpe, who witnesses the arrival of imaginary enemy parachutists)—to the terrible moment, repeated several times in the narrative, when Guy and his fellow soldiers are forced to return to port after having embarked, and psychologically prepared, for combat. "In the war of attrition which waged ceaselessly against the human spirit," Waugh writes of army life, "anti-climax was a heavy weapon" (339).

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Yet Waugh has done more than simply create anticlimaxes that mirror the "screw-ups" or "SNAFUS" endemic to mass modern armies (as Paul Fussell suggests, 26–29). He has turned the preoccupations of conventional war novels upside down. Hoping to lead men in battle, Waugh's middle-aged protagonist endures a series of desk jobs; he sustains his only "wound" (a twisted knee) while playing football with a waste basket; and his closest brush with death is a plane crash that occurs a "half mile" from where he is standing (687). The plane crash episode has been criticized by Christopher Sykes, among others, as "add[ing] little if anything" to the trilogy (428). In terms of plot, perhaps so. Yet like the countless other instances of mechanical failure or human error that Waugh presents, it does contribute significantly to the ironic patterning of incident and imagery. Here, one is reminded that nearly all the deaths and injuries in *Sword of Honour*—a title rendered ironic both by the dishonor that pervades the Allied war effort (according to Waugh) *and* by the relative absence of martial violence—are ridiculous, the results of clumsiness or incompetence, of almost anything, in short, but enemy fire. Apthorpe, supposedly a veteran of the African bush, dies from a tropical disease, which Guy ignorantly exacerbated by presenting his friend with a bottle of whiskey. Tommy Blackhouse slips on the deck of a troopship and breaks his leg, thus missing out on the debacle at Crete. In a parallel passage, Ivor Claire injures his leg during an encampment outside Alexandria by tripping on a tent rope while pursuing "Arab marauders," a phrase that in itself contributes to the ever-reductive irony of the trilogy: the "marauders," one suspects, are petty thieves or children (350). Only Virginia and Peregrine, two civilians, die at German hands, blown up by a random buzz bomb.

Anticlimax occurs in subtler ways as well, tying even the briefest of episodes or passages of description into this pattern of inexorable banality and letdown. A passage chosen almost at random from the Crete section of *Officers and Gentlemen* serves as an illustration. After witnessing growing signs of disorganization within the beleaguered British forces, "Fido" Hound and Guy finally reach Hookforce headquarters (predictably, a shambles), where they are warned to take cover from an enemy aircraft:

> The little, leisurely reconnaissance plane grew from a glint of silver to a recognizable machine. It flew low above the road, dwindled, turned, grew again, turned its attention to the lorry and fired a burst, wide by twenty yards, circled, mounted and at length disappeared to seawards into the silent quattrocento heaven. (404)

Characteristically, this passage promises the kind of vicarious thrills

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normally offered by war fiction, only to deliver anticlimactic farce. Each detail helps to deflate the drama. The dreaded aircraft, for example, is not one of the German dive bombers—whose more lethal sortees mostly occur offstage—but a miniature "reconnaissance plane." Likewise, the enemy gunner who sends Guy and Fido scrambling for cover misses his large, defenseless target by 20 yards. Through its satirical inversion of conventional war writing, the passage prepares us for the climactic anticlimax in the final volume: Ritchie-Hook's death while leading a pathetic assault on a "little block-house" manned not by the Germans but by inept Croat nationalists (677).

Although Waugh's depiction of the British disaster at Crete has been compared with Stendhal's portrayal of the French retreat from Waterloo or Hemingway's description of the rout at Caporetto, Waugh refused, I contend, to write a historical epic. Taken as a whole, the trilogy offers an impressive panorama, its "theater of operations" ranging from London to Africa, from the Hebrides to Yugoslavia, but the trend in most scenes is toward the miniature, the collapse of seemingly gigantic events or profound historical moments into small-scale farce. Thus, in his only direct confrontation with the enemy on Crete—the Germans remain virtually invisible throughout the trilogy—Guy sees not a tank, or a detachment of troops, but a motorcyclist in a "grey uniform and a close-fitting helmet" who stops once in sight of the British, turns around, and then speeds off (411). Similarly, the London blitz, featured in the opening of *Officers and Gentlemen*, is reduced to a painting—"Pure Turner" remarks Guy (237). Or take the alleged German force that cuts short the demonstration battle staged for visiting Allied generals in vol. 3: Inevitably, the column of panzers reported by the partisans turns out to be "two scout cars" (692). Perhaps the most striking instance of miniaturization, however, is the transformation of Roger of Waybroke's "sword of honour," in the same volume, into a tiny emblem on a shoulder patch, the SHAEF insignia—a menacing symbol of the geopolitical expedience that Waugh believes to have characterized the Allied war effort.

Beyond such progressions from large to small, what we might term satiric implosions, miniatures themselves enter the text in revealing ways. For instance, Guy's Uncle Peregrine, an infamous bore, collects, in addition to rare books and "bibelots," unspecified knickknacks referred to only as "miniatures" (498). This irrelevant activity mirrors not only Peregrine's self-absorption and frivolity but also the reduction in scale experienced by the Crouchback family in general, as well as the Catholic gentry whose crumbling values they symbolize. Equally telling are the activities of the model-building department at Hazardous Offensive Operations

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Headquarters, an organization housed inside the Royal Victorian Institute, a forgotten museum (501). Assigned, ostensibly, to construct replicas of invasion beaches on the continent, these "disciples of William Morris" spend most of their time painstakingly assembling a scale model of the building they inhabit (502). Thus, the irrelevance of the museum, which is "little frequented," is reproduced in the bizarre departments of HOOH, with its resident witch doctor and toy builders, and then further reproduced, as if ad infinitum, in the model. As we will see, such a density of ironic significance typifies Waugh's treatment of space and scale.

One could easily trace this pattern of anticlimax and miniaturization to Waugh's own, now legendary, frustrations and vicissitudes as a wartime officer. An intertextual dynamic operates, however, beside the biographical—the two perhaps blurring into one—as the narrative evokes and then inverts the conventions of war literature, particularly the literature of the Great War. Since Waugh joined the British Army, as Andrew Rutherford points out (114–16), in part to emulate the generation of 1914, to subject himself to the "test" that he missed 20 years earlier, it is important to remember that his conception of the Great War, the conception that drove him to enlist, was essentially *textual*, derived from books such as Guy Chapman's World War I miscellany *Vain Glory* or David Jones's *In Parenthesis*, both of which Waugh reviewed in 1937. Indeed, Waugh's career as a novelist was intertwined with the literary legacy of the Great War from the beginning, his first novel *Decline and Fall* (1928) appearing the same year as Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, R. C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*, and Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*, works that marked the advent of an international boom in World War I literature.

Therefore, Barbara Sothill's ruminations in *Put Out More Flags* (1942) perhaps suggest a conscious intertextuality at the heart of Waugh's writings on war. Imagining the fate of her brother, Basil Seal, in the opening days of World War II, Barbara falls back on the literary imagery of World War I:

> She thought of him in terms of the war books she had read. She saw him as Siegfried Sassoon, an infantry subaltern in a mud-bogged trench, standing to at dawn, his eyes on his wrist watch, waiting for zero hour; . . . she saw him as T. E. Lawrence and Rupert Brooke. (13)

The Crouchback family's participation in the Great War could not be further divorced from these textual icons: Guy's older brother Gervase died, we are told, immediately after arriving at the Western Front, "picked off by a sniper . . . fresh and clean and unwearied, as he followed the

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duckboard across the mud, carrying his blackthorn stick, on his way to report to company headquarters"[3] (15); Peregrine, true to form, contracted dysentery "on his first day in the Dardanelles and was obliged to spend the rest of the war as ADC to a colonial governor who repeatedly but vainly cabled for his recall" (597). Just as the anticlimactic destinies of Guy's brother and uncle turn the mythos of the Great War upside down, the trilogy as a whole denies the reader the excitement, however horrifying, offered by texts such as *Im Westen nichts Neues*, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, *Good-bye to All That*, or the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. In place of the drama of "zero hour," Waugh gives us a narrative with no battles at all—unless one includes the fiasco at Dakar, the rout at Crete, the absurd "Operation Popgun," or the farcical skirmish featured at the conclusion of *Unconditional Surrender*—and little violence, a narrative whose language and settings reduce wartime experience to a stream of anticlimactic banalities. Here, martial glory dies not in the trenches but in the office.

LANGUAGE

A passage from *Unconditional Surrender*, the most concentrated of the three volumes, suggests the subtlety and ironic precision of Waugh's narrative voice. Appearing near the end of the section devoted to the attack staged for Allied observers, the passage describes the moment when Guy discovers Ben Ritchie-Hook, accompanied by the photographer Sneiffel, at the head of the assault:

> [Guy] raised his binoculars and recognized the incongruous pair; the first was Ritchie-Hook. He was signaling fiercely, summoning to the advance the men behind him, who were already slinking away . . . (692)

The key phrase here is "summoning to the advance," a martial expression neatly counterbalanced, right down to the number of syllables, by the final three words, "already slinking away." The first phrase casts Ritchie-Hook as a model, heroic British officer, perhaps rather incongruously given the brigadier's suicidal love of violence, or "biffing," and his (literally) over-the-top exploits in the last war, which include returning from a trench raid with a pair of severed German heads. Since the phrase "summoning to the advance" could also describe the actions of a bugler, such as Gunga Din, it evokes the martial literature of the New Imperialism, including the adolescent fiction of G. A. Henty (programmatic works with titles such as *With Wolfe in Canada* or *With Roberts to Pretoria*), the Napoleonic novels of Conan Doyle, and the barracks poetry and fiction of Kipling.

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Also evoked is Waugh's Captain Truslove, a fictional fiction of Edwardian flavor (indeed, a seeming composite of characters from the three authors mentioned above), whose heroics Guy absorbs as a child and continues to remember fondly as an adult. As Waugh demonstrates, the values evoked by the phrase "summoning to the advance" may have a lingering significance within the tradition-conscious Halberdiers, whose formal dinner service (complete with "silver palm trees" and "bowed silver savages" [49]) suggests their anachronistic perpetuation of the imperialistic heroism embodied in Truslove, but they mean nothing amid the dishonorable arena of Yugoslavia. As a result, Ritchie-Hook's heroic gesture is appropriately undercut by the cowardly response of the partisans, seen "slinking away."

Another example of deflationary language—here, a matter of sentence length, of style, rather than word choice—occurs when the narrator describes the initially successful, but inevitably doomed, Finnish resistance to the Russian invasion of 1939:

> The newspapers, hastily scanned, were full of Finnish triumphs. Ghostly ski troops, Guy read, swept through the sunless Arctic forests harassing the mechanized divisions of the Soviet who had advanced with massed bands and portraits of Stalin expecting a welcome, whose prisoners were ill-equipped, underfed, quite ignorant of whom they were fighting and why. English forces, delayed only by a few diplomatic complications, were on their way to help. Russian might had proved to be an illusion. Mannerheim held the place in English hearts won in 1914 by King Albert of the Belgians. Then quite suddenly it appeared that the Finns were beaten. (133)

While the passage detailing Ritchie-Hook's final moments relies for its irony on the connotative resonance of a time-honored martial expression, the account of the Finnish defeat utilizes a stylistic juxtaposition to achieve a sardonic effect. Note how the narrator piles one dramatic, hopeful detail on top of another, all presented amid relatively complex sentences, only to collapse the entire structure with a terse, intentionally bland and matter-of-fact, statement: "Then quite suddenly it appeared that the Finns were beaten." The eerie ski troops, the alleged ineptness of the Soviets, British sympathy—all prove to be sound and fury signifying nothing. Through this style, Waugh frequently inflates, and then punctures, the sense of drama that Guy—and the reader— expects of war experience.

A similarly reductive juxtaposition occurs in the collision between Guy's personal vocabulary of war, imbued with chivalric and liturgical significance, and the degraded, abbreviated usages of the modern British Army. This linguistic battle begins in the opening chapters of *Men at Arms*—

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though the title itself stems from chivalric discourse—as the narrator, at this point centered in the protagonist's consciousness, uses deliberately archaic diction to reflect Guy's naiveté. Referring to the Russian-German alliance of 1939, which prompts Guy's return to England and his commitment to the war effort, the narrator remarks, "The enemy at last was plain in view, huge and hateful, all disguise cast off. It was the Modern Age in arms" (10). The language in this passage subtly underpins two of Guy's weaknesses: his chivalric nostalgia, suggested by phrases such as "plain in view" and "in arms," and his simplistic conception of the coming war as a contest between Christianity and the "huge and hateful" Mammon represented by the atheistic nations of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. These chivalric and religious sentiments find additional expression in Guy's parting words at Roger of Waybroke's tomb, as the modern man at arms asks the medieval knight to pray for their "endangered kingdom" (11).

In contrast with Guy's romantic idiom, which defines the war as a lofty crusade, stands the coldly utilitarian bureaucratese of the British military, a language best illustrated by the cryptic description of Guy spit out by the "Electric Personnel Selector," an early computer, in vol. 3: "A/Ty. Captain Crouchback, G.,R.C.H., att. H.O.O. HQ" (505). Like Robert Graves in *Good-bye to All That* (1929), Waugh delights in parodying the ridiculously truncated or patently euphemistic usages of military discourse, as when Tommy Blackhouse, delirious after breaking his leg, delivers an especially demented set of orders to the soldiers about to land at Crete:

> Forward headquarters consisting of BM and IO will report to Lt. Col. Prentice at B Commando HQ and give him written orders from GHQ. ME defining the special role of Hookforce in harassing enemy L of C . . . Lt. Col. Prentice will report to G.O.C. Creforce and present these orders. (392)

Equally hilarious is the "monotone, liturgical incantation" delivered by a radio operator during a typically disastrous training exercise in *Men at Arms*. Once again, the text brings the narrator's ecclesiastical idiom—"liturgical incantation"—into collision with the vapid discourse of modern armies: "Hullo Nan, Hullo Nan. Report my signals. Over," drones the radio operator, attempting to reach several units who are hopelessly lost. "Hullo Nan. Hullo King. Nothing heard. Out. Hullo Able. Am hearing you strength one, inference five. Out. Hullo all stations." (175). And so on.[4]

The monosyllabic slang that characterizes wartime speech represents still another example of linguistic miniaturization, as the narrative moves

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from Guy's expansive diction, which dominates the opening of the first volume, to terse usages that trivialize death or disaster and render the war increasingly banal. Such language permeates the trilogy, constantly vying with Guy's more grandiloquent discourse. Virginia Troy, for example, describes the victims of German air raids as "blitzed" (553). Parachutists with malfunctioning equipment become "roman candles" (570). Egyptians are "Gyppos" (354). Yugoslav partisans are "Jugs" (702). Persons imprisoned and executed by the partisans, such as the Kanyis, are "jugged" (705). Incompetents are "duds" (480). Aggressive commanders are "fizzers" (469). Needless forms are "bumf" (429). A mistake or misunderstanding is a "balls-up" (82). Reprimands are "rockets" (108). Letters "sealed with a loving kiss" are signed with the grotesque acronym "SWALK" (230). Waugh could not resist associating such debased language with the Americans in the trilogy (whose names, including that of the aptly titled "Loot," are appropriately hideous), especially the three loathsome journalists introduced in *Officers and Gentlemen*: Scab Dunz, Bum Schlum, and Joe Mulligan. Through their abrupt titles and craggy manner, such characters resemble the similarly inhospitable Isles of "Mugg," "Muck," "Eigg," and "Rum" (274–75) featured in Guy's surreal Hebridean sojourn, while their no-less-truncated speech consists of colloquial clichés—"So what the hell?," "Is that a fact?," and "What's the story?" (443–44)—that reflect the debased condition of modern journalism and American English.

More disturbing than wartime abbreviations, jargon, and slang, however, are instances of language intentionally misapplied, as when, in *Unconditional Surrender*, Frank De Souza switches the titles of two partisan units from "brigade" to "company" in order to exaggerate their effectiveness. If Guy is an intentionally tepid version of Waugh himself, lacking (like Siegfried Sassoon's George Sherston) his inventor's artistic abilities, then De Souza represents Waugh's frenetic creative energy severed from any corresponding moral restraint. Indeed, although ostensibly a communist, De Souza delights in arbitrarily assigning meaning and moves through the trilogy as a kind of rhetorical anarchist, utilizing his formidable powers of language to create havoc. In Ludovic, reintroduced in the third volume as the commandant of a parachute school, De Souza finds his greatest inspiration, dubbing the otherworldly commandant "Major Dracula," and concocting fantastic explanations for Ludovic's bizarre behavior—explanations delivered with so much artistic and rhetorical finesse, however, that they envelope the entire school in an atmosphere of "mystery and dread" (133). Through De Souza's overwrought inventiveness and belabored black humor, the trilogy

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momentarily prefigures the surreal world of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Even before Ludovic makes his somnambulistic entrance, for example, De Souza manages to terrify the other trainees—who are already fearful of becoming "roman candles"—with conspiracy theories worthy of Yossarian at his most justifiably paranoid. No one has seen the commandant, De Souza explains, because

> [h]e's being held prisoner. There's been a palace plot and his staff are selling the rations on the black market. Or do you think the whole place has been taken over by the Gestapo? Where could parachutists most safely land? At a parachute training base. They shot everyone except the commandant. They have to keep him to sign the bumf. Meanwhile they get particulars of all our agents. There's that instructor who's always fooling with the camera. Says he's making "action studies" to correct faulty positions in jumping. Of course what he's really doing is making records of us all. They'll be microfilmed and sent out via Portugal. Then the Gestapo will have a complete portrait gallery and they can pick us up as soon as we show our faces. (571–72)

Yet De Souza's fantasies, unlike Heller's, are not intended as satire: They are merely brilliant lies, expertly crafted (note the devious insertion of "of course"), but serving only to display their creator's extravagant imagination and to disorient his listeners. Thus, his tale of imminent capture by the Gestapo, a facetious death wish, is as empty as Ludovic's novel of that title: Both narratives mask the soullessness of their authors behind a glittery surface of artifice and aestheticism.

The effects of Ian Kilbannock's misapplied language are even more serious. While Guy's war experience steadily shrinks, moving from the grandiose to the trivial, Kilbannock's propaganda, like De Souza's fictions, works in the reverse, *inflating* irrelevant or banal situations into high drama. Hence, to cite the most spectacular example of this willful severance of signifiers from the signified, the farcical "Operation Popgun" becomes, through the agency of Kilbannock's typewriter, a daring assault on Fortress Europe, and the cowardly Trimmer—whose name suggests the expeditious cuts and adjustments made by his unscrupulous creator—an exemplar of British manhood.[5] A betrayer of the traditional class structure (it is he who unleashes the upstart air marshall on Bellamy's and who reinvents a cockney as the ultimate knight at arms), *Lord* Kilbannock demonstrates the obsolescence of Guy's chivalric idiom by suggesting that such language only has meaning when invoked ironically. As B. W. Wilson has pointed out,[6] Kilbannock's drunken misquotation of Hugh Latimer ("We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out" [377]) evokes the medieval flavor of Churchillian rhetoric

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amid, of course, the most ridiculous situation imaginable: a tiny raid *accidentally* directed against the French coast.

Waugh invites us to laugh at such lunatic corruptions of language and rhetoric—and the way that this corruption carries over into the lives of the characters—but not without bitterness, for the obliteration of factual discourse conducted by De Souza and Kilbannock represents the most alarming deflation in the trilogy, one even worse than the bizarre acronyms and jargon that have perverted the language of arms or the vulgar slang and Americanisms that Waugh presents as corroding the mother tongue: the collapse of language into an arbitrary instrument of political coercion.

SETTING

Just as Waugh's language—and his presentation of language as a subject in the narrative—creates a deflationary pattern, the settings in *Sword of Honour* present several reductive motifs: most prominently, the collapse of large spaces into small or the clearing away of old, meaningful objects in favor of hollow forms of modernity. As James Carens implies,[7] by provocatively comparing the trilogy with Forster's *Howards End* and Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Sword of Honour* focuses on the issue of national destiny during a period of social upheaval (in this case wartime). To adopt Guy's medieval idiom, who will emerge from the test of World War II to rule the Kingdom of England, thus controlling and dividing its space? And, concomitantly, who will define the values of the culture as a whole? Space, then, in terms of land and interiors, assumes virtually the same importance as it does, to extend the useful comparisons that Carens makes, in a Jane Austen novel; it is typically tied to issues of class power and responsibility.

Granted, some of the settings in the trilogy serve primarily to create comic juxtapositions, the more bizarre and unexpected the better. A good example is the Hebridean "New Castle" featured in *Officers and Gentlemen*. A neo-Scottish fortress, replete with "objects of furniture constructed of antlers" (288), an irrepressible bagpipe player, and blinding peat smoke, the New Castle seems to exist outside of time—hence its contradictory title—and at a surreal remove from the nearby training operations of Tommy Blackhouse's X Commando (yet another ridiculous military title). An equally outrageous contrast results from the throw-away, almost Monty Pythonesque, juxtaposition of Apthorpe's exotic Victorian safari gear, brought all the way from Africa, with the drab closets and sheds where it is hidden from Ritchie-Hook's single watchful eye. More ominous, but

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likewise born of Waugh's delight in the incongruous, are the rooms of Kut-al-Imara, the funereal grammar school where the Halberdiers encamp in *Men at Arms*; each is named after a bloodbath of World War I, including "Paschendael," "Loos," "Wipers (so spelt)," and "Anzac" (84), and thus mocks the frivolity of Guy's training during the Phoney War period of 1939.

Yet Waugh's treatment of physical space more typically reflects the steady shrinkage of all that the noble, anachronistic Crouchbacks represent. In the case of the Crouchbacks' family seat, Broome, this shrinkage is literal. Unlike *Howards End*—or, for that matter, *Brideshead Revisited*—*Sword of Honour* centers not on the country house but on its absence, its ghost. Broome, we learn in the first volume, is now lent to a convent, its furnishings auctioned off to pay creditors, while Guy's father occupies two rooms in the nearby Marine Hotel. By the middle of *Officers and Gentleman*, this space has collapsed into a single compartment, as Mr. Crouchback, informed by Mrs. Vavasour of the Cuthberts' scheme to evict him (so that they may capitalize on the wartime housing shortage), relinquishes his sitting room. The contest over room allocation within the Marine Hotel, in which Waugh pits a reduced squire against plebeian usurpers, abetted by a housing officer (the embodiment of intrusive, liberal government), belongs among the trilogy's many parodies of warfare, which range from the mock-heroic struggle between Apthorpe and Ritchie-Hook, over the mock-Promethean thunderbox, to X Commando's machine gun massacre of seals and deer on the Isle of Mugg. More importantly, however, the episode presents the class dynamics of *Sword of Honour* in microcosm: The traditional landed classes, represented by the waning Crouchbacks (as opposed to the more resilient but less chivalrous smart set of Bellamy's), are, we see, shrinking in the face of postagrarian values, wartime class leveling, and populist politics.[8]

True, Mr. Crouchback does repossess his sitting room, but only after the evacuees have returned to the cities, leaving the opportunistic Cuthberts with little option but to satisfy their original tenants. Nor is this the final stage in Guy's father's claustrophobic descent from the spacious rooms of Broome and the power and freedom that they once represented. From his cramped quarters in the Marine Hotel, he is eventually moved to the "little burying ground" beside the medieval church in Matchet, where, the narrator tellingly remarks, there "was not room for many [mourners] to stand" (541). Not surprisingly, the church itself mirrors, once again in spatial terms, the Crouchbacks' decline and the wasting away of English Catholicism: "the nave and chancel are of Anglican use," while only "the north isle and adjoining burying ground are the property

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of the lord of the manor" (534).

Moreover, it is fitting, given the trilogy's reductive motifs, that Guy winds up at the close of the final volume in the "Lesser House" or "Little Hall" (491) of the once-expansive Crouchback estate, while Ludovic, whose decadent excesses in the final volume parody Guy's earlier withdrawal from human ties, purchases Guy's previous home in Italy. The former structure signals Guy's renewed commitment to life and to the traditional responsibilities of his class, albeit on a scale greatly reduced from that of his ancestors. The latter has a more ambiguous significance. Though founded by Guy's attractive, Pre-Raphaelite grandparents, Gervase and Hermione, and described fondly by the narrator, the Crouchbacks' Italian estate assumes an ominous aura early on. It is significant, for example, that honeysuckle obscures the structure's original title, the "Villa Hermione," leading the locals to refer to the building by the less felicitous, even grotesque, appellation of "Castello Crouchback." This detail subtly prepares us for the discovery that this "place of love and joy" (9) has been perverted by Guy's self-imposed exile from England. For it is here, in a structure intended originally as a setting for "honeymoons" and "holidays" (9) (never as a substitute for the true, however diminished, Castle Crouchback in England), that Guy spends seven years brooding over his failed marriage, cut off from his surroundings and from the true meaning of his faith, never *"simpatico"* (13). Thus, the "Castello Crouchback," already darkened by Guy's withdrawal, will make an appropriate setting for Sir Ralph Brompton's homosexual circle—throughout *Unconditional Surrender*, Waugh, like Hemingway, associates homosexuality with cultural degeneration—and for Ludovic's isolating aestheticism.

Nor are the Crouchbacks alone in the shrinkage and perversion of their physical structures. Aristocratic space is threatened throughout the trilogy, both by the pressures of wartime and by the dawning Age of the Common Man, which Waugh so despised. Not unlike Broome, the Kilbannocks' family seat in Scotland, we are told in passing, "had been requisitioned and, though massive, was being eroded by soldiers. The Dowager Lady Kilbannock lived in the factor's house" (561). Likewise, vulgarity in the form of Air Marshal Beech insinuates its way into Bellamy's, Guy's once exclusively upper-class club, while Trimmer performs the same feat within the club's wartime extension: X Commando. Nor is it a coincidence that the aristocratic Ivor Clair, whom Guy naively idolizes as the "fine flower of them all" (342), wins his MC for "shooting three territorials who were trying to swamp his boat" at Dunkirk (281). In this particular example of besieged upper-class space, Waugh's irony soon turns against Clair, who has abandoned the chivalric code, and the Army,

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which misconstrues (as with "Operation Popgun") cowardice as valor. When Julia Stitch later remarks that Clair naturally found a "more comfortable" means of escaping from Crete than Guy's nightmarish passage—"Trust Ivor for that," she tells Guy—Waugh perhaps provides a clue that the "three territorials" at Dunkirk were not "*trying* to swamp his boat" at all (461, emphasis mine). Clair, a latter-day Dorian Grey, handsome but amoral, thus parallels Ludovic ("Dracula"), the working-class murderer.

Guy's disenchantment with the Army, which Clair's disgrace exacerbates, is also presented in terms of space—or, more specifically, through images of diffusion. When Guy returns to the anteroom of the Halberdier barracks following his disillusioning misadventure in West Africa, he finds that the regimental memorabilia associated with his heady days as a recruit has been removed:

> It was not the room Guy had known, where he had sprained his knee on Guest Night. A dark rectangle over the fireplace marked the spot where 'The Unbroken Square' had hung; the bell from the Dutch frigate, the Afridi banner, the gilt idol from Burma, the Napoleonic cuirasses, the Ashanti drum, the loving-cup from Barbados, Tipu Sultan's musket, all were gone. (245–46)

A similar image appears in connection with the Great Hall at Broome, which, in Guy's childhood, had "been hung with weapons collected in many quarters and symmetrically arranged in great steely radiations of blades and barrels" (543). "These," the narrator concludes, in yet another terse, deflationary statement, "had been sold with the rest of the furniture" (543). In both passages, we see the dispersal of objects that reflect externally Guy's romantic mental picture of war, a mental picture that is likewise cleared, by the conclusion of the trilogy, of both its medieval regalia and the late-Victorian trappings of Truslove's adventures.

By the beginning of *Unconditional Surrender*, Guy has himself become a piece of martial flotsam, relegated to a forgotten office in the HOOH, which "he shar[es] with a plaster reconstruction of a megalosaurus, under whose huge flanks his trestle table was invisible from the door" (501). The dinosaur image could not be more appropriate: Amid the darkening world of the final volume, with its Byzantine conspiracies and pragmatic sellouts, Guy's notions of chivalry seem prehistoric. Other objects in the office suggest a surrealistic hell: On the trestle table, for example, are "three wire trays, 'In,' 'Out,' and 'Pending,' all empty that afternoon—a telephone, and a jigsaw puzzle" (501). Buried deep within the Royal Victorian Institute, this silent room becomes the ultimate symbol, in spatial

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terms, of the gap between Guy's expansive visions of glory on the battlefield and the claustrophobic realities of modern, bureaucratized warfare.

Guy's subsequent experiences in Yugoslavia, where he indirectly aids Tito's partisans in replacing one form of totalitarianism (and anti-Semitism) with another, further confirm the importance of physical settings in the narrative. Again, images of violated or perverted structures pervade the text: The Yugoslav church where Guy prays for his dead wife, for example, "had been renovated and repainted and adorned and despoiled, neglected and cosseted through the centuries"; as with the similarly degraded chapel at Broome, only "parts" of the original structure survive; partisan police lurk outside "shunning the mystery" (668–69). Attached to an appropriately shrinking—and, ironically, unwelcome—liaison office, Guy ends his crusade acting as Moses for a group of Jewish refugees, who, in one of Waugh's bitterest touches, are confined by the partisans to a death camp previously used by "the Germans and Ustachi" (701). Thus, the spiritual corruption suggested by the church is confirmed as we see the physical structures of genocide traded back and forth between various Yugoslav factions (a grim foretaste of the Balkans wars in the 1990s).

Perhaps the most memorable presentation of physical space, however, occurs in the blockhouse attack, the pathetic "engagement" that, at the close of vol. 3, finally finishes off any hope still held by Guy—or the reader—of witnessing conventional military spectacle. We have already seen how Waugh's language subtly contributes to the anticlimactic dynamics of this scene. Equally important are the details of the setting. First, there is the target itself, yet another building perversely turned from its original purpose: Built "more than a century earlier, [as] part of the defensive line of Christendom against the Turk," the blockhouse now houses fascist "*domobrans*," "lazy people" who are still asleep when the partisan forces (the brigades that De Souza converts on paper into companies) move into the position (690). Waugh adds to the ridiculousness by placing this minuscule objective in a wide valley, which stresses its strategic irrelevance, and by providing the observers with a panoramic view of the mock battlefield, described throughout with such incongruously biblical phrases as "[t]here was no longer peace in the valley" (691). Predictably, the "battle" fought amid this absurd setting is a fiasco: The partisans reveal their positions prematurely, are bombed by their own air support, and then flee from what later prove to be fictitious German tanks. "Before a German armoured column [we] disperse," explains the interpreter. "That is the secret of our great and many victories" (691). No one notices that Ritchie-Hook has slipped away from the group until it is too late; subsumed into the grotesque pointlessness of the situation, his

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death merely adds irony to irony, leading the Pattonesque American general to conclude erroneously that the partisans "mean business," and prompting the Germans, who suspect a ruse, "to be vigilant for one-eyed men" (693). Ignorance and stupidity thus characterize decision making at the highest levels of the Allied and Axis armies—a "vista of chaos" indeed.

As the title of the American edition of *Unconditional Surrender—The End of the Battle*—suggests, the blockhouse episode is the closest thing to a battle in the entire trilogy, the only moment when shots fired in anger actually have lethal results. And it is the moment when Waugh's use of miniaturization and anticlimax reaches its greatest intensity and brilliance. Here, as in the chapters set in Dakar and Crete, *Sword of Honour* becomes the ultimate antiwar novel, but not through the emotional polemics and shock tactics of its World War I precursors; rather, Waugh refuses to grant modern warfare even the dignity of tragedy or horror, stressing instead its essential banality and emptiness.

CONCLUSION

By focusing on reductive motifs, I have necessarily stressed the darker dimensions of the trilogy, perhaps creating the impression that its various implosions, both linguistic and spatial, finally draw the entire narrative into a black hole of nihilism and despair. Such a collapse, however, never occurs, in part because *Sword of Honour* ultimately constitutes more than a satirical anti-epic: Consistent with Waugh's inversion of literary genres and conventions, Guy's middle-aged adventures also form a pattern more typically found in novels with younger heroes—that of the *Bildungsroman*. Though 35 at the opening of the trilogy, Guy begins his crusade as, essentially, an adolescent, one whose innocence and idealism, at least in regard to modern warfare, seem closer to the generation of 1914 than 1939. Thus, Waugh's relentless emphasis on shrinkage paradoxically complements the protagonist's *growth* as he sheds his faith in the redemptive value of war and modifies his concept of chivalry to accommodate more personal, less dramatic acts of self-sacrifice and commitment to others—such as the adoption of Trimmer's son. Here, for once, miniaturization becomes a positive, as Waugh, like Dickens, locates the possibility of virtue only within the intimate confines of private life. Indeed, Guy's most poignant moment of self-recognition—the climax of the trilogy—comes when he realizes that the chivalric code which led him to join a "just war" of nations made him part of a collective death wish. When Mme. Kanyi remarks that "even good men thought their

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private honour could be satisfied by war, [that] [t]hey could assert their manhood by killing and being killed," Guy can only respond: "God forgive me, I was one of them" (702).

Guy's growth by the end of *Unconditional Surrender* has also been spiritual. Though mired, as we have seen, in situations that ceaselessly deflate into pettiness and banality, Guy rejuvenates the faith that he had earlier practiced as an empty formality by accepting his father's precept that "Quantitative judgements don't apply" in matters of the church: "If only one soul was saved that is full compensation for any amount of loss of face" (491). Meant to describe the actions of the "Mystical Body" (specifically in regard to the Lateran Treaty), Mr. Crouchback's remarks ultimately apply to his son, who becomes a modest Christ figure through his rescue of Virginia's soul and that of her child. Moreover, Guy saves himself: At the conclusion, he has shaken free of egocentric isolation, transferred his Palace of Art to Ludovic, and reentered life through a second marriage and fatherhood—albeit in the Lesser House.

Seen in this way, then, Waugh's use of miniaturization and anticlimax unites a number of thematic emphases in the text: the send-up of bureaucratized total war (accomplished through the systematic overturning of war novel conventions), the lament for Catholic gentry in decline, and the pedagogical focus on Guy's redefinition of his chivalric and spiritual values. Such density underscores the brilliance of Waugh's magnum opus, a work that retains the manic energy of the earlier novels—and much of their chaotic irony—while cautiously, and never sentimentally, positing the survival of goodness in a century dominated by the death wish.

NOTES

[1] Since the Everyman's Library edition is the only version now available in the United States, I have selected it as my primary text. For better or worse, this edition ignores the revisions contained in Waugh's one-volume recension, completed in 1965, and presents *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen*, and *Unconditional Surrender* in their original form. Frank Kermode's introduction—thorough in every other respect—does not explain why.

[2] These include—along with the analyses offered by Burgess, Rutherford, and Bergonzi—Robert Blow's "*Sword of Honour*: A Novel with a Hero," James F. Carens's "All Gentlemen Are Now Very Old," Patrick Costello's "An Idea of Comedy and Waugh's *Sword of Honour*," Marston LaFrance's "*Sword of Honour*: The Ironist Placatus," Colman O'Hare's "The Sacred and Profane Memories of Evelyn Waugh's *Men at Arms*," and B. W. Wilson's "*Sword of Honour*: The Last Crusade." Several biographical studies address the trilogy as well; most helpful are Humphrey Carpenter's *Evelyn Waugh and His Generation*, Calvin Lane's *Evelyn Waugh*, and Martin Stannard's *Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years, 1939–1966*.

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[3] Among other things, Waugh points us here to the wealth of ironic associations implicit in the Crouchback name: Had Gervase only *crouched* while passing the parapet, he might have lived. Yet to do so would have violated the sense of knightly, aristocratic honor implied by Gervase's entry "straight into the Irish Guards" and his dandyish "blackthorn stick," the modern man at arms'—or officer's and gentleman's—substitute for the sword. Thus, this character's death suggests the disastrous incongruity between the noble, chivalrous Crouchbacks and the modern world, an incongruity confirmed by Guy's misadventures in the next war.

[4] Again, like *Good-bye to All That*—with its collection of cryptic military documents and incoherent student essays—*Sword of Honour* repeatedly stresses that miscommunication is endemic to the modern age, especially in wartime. Examples of garbled communication in the trilogy range from the mysterious titles of the American products, such as "Brisko" and "Yumcrunch," which Guy's father receives in a care package from the United States, to the bizarre telegrams that announce the "birch" (birth) of Virginia's son (655).

[5] Appropriately, Trimmer, the antithesis of Roger of Waybroke, is associated throughout the trilogy with reductive phallic imagery. In contrast with the medieval knight's sword, for example, is Trimmer's commando dagger, a weapon that, of course, he never uses. Note as well the emasculated title of Trimmer's most celebrated exploit—"Operation Popgun"—and the dysfunctional antiaircraft gun, with a round "stuck half in and half out of the breech" (282) placed under his command on the Isle of Mugg.

[6] In "*Sword of Honour:* The Last Crusade," Wilson persuasively interprets the trilogy as "a parody of chivalry" (88).

[7] See Carens's introduction to *Critical Essays on Evelyn Waugh*, 22–23.

[8] Here I am indebted to Martin Parsons of the University of Reading for his expertise on the British homefront during the blitz. My observations on class struggle within the Marine Hotel derive from our discussion of wartime evacuations and housing.

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Framing Water: Historical Knowledge in Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich

Roger Gilbert

As the two most prominent women poets of their generations in the United States, Elizabeth Bishop and Adrienne Rich embody sharply contrasting attitudes toward poetry and its cultural roles. Most critics have tended to approach Bishop as an aesthete, essentially private in her concerns and vision, while viewing Rich as an activist, strongly committed to the use of poetry as an instrument of social change.[1] The facts of the case are not quite so neat, however. Rich's early poetry explores much of the same thematic terrain as Bishop's—domesticity, travel, memory—and even in its later phases her work continues to take individual experience as the base from which to mount its political critiques. Conversely, as a number of critics have shown, including Rich herself and most recently Betsy Erkkila, Bishop's poetry is far from indifferent to issues of social and economic justice.[2] The real locus of difference between them, I want to argue, is not politics but history. The two poets disagree not so much over questions of action as questions of knowledge, which necessarily precede and inform action. More specifically, they disagree over the extent to which the poet is capable of gaining unmediated access to the truth of history, even when that history may be suppressed, silenced, or submerged.

Two of their most familiar and oft-anthologized poems—Bishop's "At the Fishhouses" and Rich's "Diving Into the Wreck"—reveal some surprising affinities of trope and language while casting into relief the fundamental differences between the poets, which revolve around questions of knowledge, history, and, in a key metaphor for both poems, immersion. Most prominently, both poems allegorize the sea as a medium of pure knowing wholly distinct from the compromised, constructed world above. Bishop famously says of the icy water off Nova Scotia that "It is

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like what we imagine knowledge to be: / dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free, / drawn from the cold hard mouth / of the world, derived from the rocky breasts / forever, flowing and drawn, and since / our knowledge is historical, flowing and flown" (66). "Historical" in this final line assumes a double meaning: Our knowledge is necessarily historical inasmuch as it occurs in time and is therefore subject to the transience of all temporal things, "flowing and flown"; but it is also knowledge *of* history, of the lives and events that precede our own and give it meaning. Thus the history of this particular Nova Scotia fishing village proves to be closely bound up with Bishop's own painful childhood and its formation of her present self. The old man the speaker meets near the water "was a friend of my grandfather," she tells us, and like the "ancient wooden capstan" with its "melancholy stains, like dried blood," his presence speaks of a past beyond recovery. "We talk of the decline in the population," she reports dryly, her euphemistic language failing to obscure that the real subject of their conversation is death—her grandfather's included, as the "was" in the preceding line poignantly attests.[3]

Rich's allegory is no less clear-cut than Bishop's, but she is not quite as explicit in her association of the sea with knowledge, choosing at first to characterize it by negation: "the sea is another story / the sea is not a question of power / I have to learn alone / to turn my body without force / in the deep element" (*Fact* 163). The world of the "sun-flooded schooner" with its "sundry equipment" of ladders, knives, books, and masks is governed, like the human world at large, by the will to power, the effort to master and subjugate one's environment. But the sea does not yield to such efforts, requiring a different approach, gradual, patient, "without force." As becomes clear in the course of the poem, this is because the sea marks a dimension beyond the reach of change, action, or intervention. Like memory, the sea preserves traces of past traumas that can only be inspected, acknowledged, and laboriously brought to light, never revised or effaced. Like Bishop's sea, then, Rich's is ineluctably historical, but unlike Bishop's, the kind of knowledge it contains is not "flowing and flown" but stable, solid, "more permanent than fish or weed." The wreck is not going anywhere.

If both poems draw metaphorical maps in which the sea embodies a pure or imagined knowledge beyond the reach of all human agency, they differ crucially in the ways they approach this alien realm. The two poems share a fundamentally downward trajectory; both begin above sea level and then chart an incremental descent that carries them past its threshold. Bishop and Rich employ similar poetic devices to evoke this movement, crafting strongly transitional passages that mimic in their cadence and

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syntax the sinking motions they describe. Bishop's passage is especially ingenious in its interplay of form and matter:

> Down at the water's edge, at the place
> where they haul up the boats, up the long ramp
> descending into the water, thin silver
> tree trunks are laid horizontally
> across the gray stones, down and down
> at intervals of four or five feet.

This passage itself forms the descending ramp it names, made up of regular horizontal lines each containing "four or five feet." The corresponding passage in Rich's poem also gives a drumlike emphasis to the word *down:*

> I go down.
> Rung after rung and still
> the oxygen immerses me
> the blue light
> the clear atoms
> of our human air.
> I go down.
> My flippers cripple me,
> I crawl like an insect down the ladder
> and there is no one
> to tell me when the ocean
> will begin.

In both passages the transition from land to sea is measured and gradual, but in Rich's poem it is quite clearly a matter of active agency, a willed descent undertaken in the face of enormous difficulty. Bishop is more circumspect; she merely registers the means of descent without evoking an individual act. Her greater ambivalence toward this route may be gauged by the clashing vectors named in her passage—"*Down* at the water's edge, at the place / where they haul *up* the boats, *up* the long ramp / *descending* into the water" (my emphasis)—creating a push-pull effect rather than the impression of steady, purposeful movement given by Rich's lines.

Both poets also signal the transition to a more fluid medium by loosening or abandoning punctuation; Bishop describes the water as "Cold dark deep and absolutely clear," omitting the commas she would normally place after the first three adjectives, while Rich makes a more dramatic elision to suggest the diver's felt loss of control in an alien element: "First the air is blue and then / it is bluer and then / green and then / black I am blacking out and yet / my mask is powerful." Again, however, what sets their approaches most dramatically apart is the degree of willfulness each brings to the water and the dark knowledge it represents. Bishop's speaker

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does not, of course, physically enter the sea as Rich's does, only surmising its effects on her body ("If you should dip your hand in, / your wrist would ache immediately"); but even in her imaginary descent she seems halting and full of trepidation, casting about for distractions in something close to a panic. After calling the sea an "element bearable to no mortal," she offers the typically Bishopian self-correction "to fish and to seals," thus opening the way for a digression about a particular seal that briefly dispels the gathering sense of menace. Playfully invoking debates over the proper method of Christian baptism, Bishop reports that this seal is "like me a believer in total immersion," a line with clear implications for the poem's allegory of knowledge. Yet like Bishop's speaker, the seal's behavior seems to belie such firm belief, as it anxiously hovers on the threshold between the two elements: "he would disappear, then suddenly emerge / almost in the same spot, with a sort of shrug / as if it were against his better judgment." The seal's tentative probing of the dangerous world above the water closely mirrors the speaker's reluctant engagement with the sea, an element she acknowledges to be "bearable to no mortal."

As though drawn irresistibly back to the water, the speaker next repeats her earlier formulation—"Cold dark deep and absolutely clear"—then tears her eyes away once more: "Back, behind us, / the dignified tall firs begin." After another quick descriptive interlude she returns for a last time to the sea, now forcibly maintaining her gaze: "I have seen it over and over, the same sea, the same, / slightly, indifferently swinging above the stones, / icily free above the stones, / above the stones and then the world." In a characteristic bit of metaphorical sleight of hand, Bishop inverts the usual mapping of land and water, placing the sea "*above* the stones and then the world" (my emphasis) as if to reinforce its status as a dimension of knowledge detached from and indifferent to all worldly particulars. The hypnotic repetitions in these lines hint at the speaker's tormented relation to the sea, betraying a compulsive, almost masochistic drive to enter its deathly space. She knows too well what the results of such contact must be, though: "your bones would begin to ache and your hand would burn / as if the water were a transmutation of fire / that feeds on stones and burns with a dark gray flame."

I've already cited the allegorizing passage that ends the poem, disclosing in a somber epiphany that this corrosive element that entices and destroys is knowledge in its purest state. What the poem stages with great power is the profound ambivalence toward knowledge that energizes much of Bishop's work. Her poetry repeatedly locates itself on the threshold between aesthetic and cognitive modes of apprehension, feeling

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and recording the pull of each, yet unwilling to immerse itself completely in either.[4] Bishop's penchant for picturesque description—the celebrated "eye" once invoked by critics to relegate her to minor status—certainly appears in "At the Fishhouses," particularly the poem's first half, with its lovingly textured account of a landscape plastered with herring scales; but its presence there serves chiefly to set off the colorless, homogenous, cold realm of knowledge that waits below.

Where "At the Fishhouses" remains uneasily poised on the margin that divides land and sea, unwilling to do more than conjecturally dip a hand into the chill water, "Diving Into the Wreck" takes the full plunge, in keeping with Rich's more aggressive stance toward knowledge. Rich's diver is of course much better equipped than Bishop's speaker to enter the hostile element, with her mask, wet suit, and flippers; for her the boundary is there to be crossed, not gingerly tested and probed. Thus, while Bishop's poem divides itself symmetrically between the fishhouses and the water, positioning the ramp-passage as a kind of fulcrum, Rich's poem takes place almost entirely underwater, with only the most cursory reference to a world above. Indeed the language used to narrate the diver's initial descent suggests it is what she calls the "human air," not the water, that threatens to drown her: "Rung after rung and still / the oxygen *immerses* me" (my emphasis). The dull atmosphere of ordinary human affairs is itself an immersing element, Rich insists, to be cast off through total immersion in the more bracing element of historical memory. Rich is as conscious of the hazards the sea presents as Bishop is, yet she forces herself to confront them because the knowledge she envisions there is not simply fatal but potentially redemptive as well. The poets' differing conceptions of knowledge are clearly reflected in their central tropes: Whereas Bishop identifies knowledge with the sea itself—gray, undifferentiated, numbingly abstract—Rich makes of the sea a medium through which more specific, localized objects of knowledge like the wreck can be encountered and explored. Unlike Bishop's paralyzing generality, the cautionary knowledge Rich seeks can be put to use, carried back to the surface and translated into action, and so warrants the kind of active questing her speaker undertakes.

Another key point of contrast between the two poems involves the place of beauty in their allegories of knowledge. In Bishop's poem, beauty is located entirely above the water, among the weathered fishhouses and tubs lined "with layers of beautiful herring scales." It's here that the speaker encounters the old man who has "scraped the scales, the principal beauty, / from unnumbered fish with that black old knife, / the blade of which is almost worn away." That scraping movement serves as another powerful

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emblem for this poem's vision of knowledge, which entails a remorseless expunging of beauty and sensual particularity so as to arrive at the cold gray substance of truth. Rich's diver also carries a knife whose blade she dutifully checks, but her excavations lead her *toward* beauty rather than *away* from it: Even as the wreck bears witness to damage and disaster, she tells us, it has been "worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty." Again we can surmise that it is the redemptive, nearly utopian potential Rich ascribes to the knowledge of disaster that lends it beauty, where Bishop finds in it only beauty's antithesis. By positing an aesthetic reward at journey's end, Rich shows that her impulse to descend into the harsh element of historical knowledge is neither masochistic nor purely altruistic. If Bishop's poem is a psychodrama that stages or enacts a central ambivalence, Rich's poem is essentially didactic, meant to instruct and embolden us in our own quests for difficult knowledge.

I want to turn now to another pair of poems by Bishop and Rich that may be said to put into practice the historical and epistemological principles allegorically set forth in "At the Fishhouses" and "Diving Into the Wreck," and raise additional questions about the nature of historical knowledge and its representation. Bishop's diffidence regarding poetry's capacity to enter and represent history is reflected in the oblique strategies she employs in her relatively few poems on historical subjects. "Brazil, January 1, 1501" will serve as my example, a poem from her 1965 volume *Questions of Travel*. Written during her residence in Brazil, the poem compares her own impressions of the lush countryside to those of the newly arrived conquistadors 450 years earlier. Here is the poem's opening stanza:

> Januaries, Nature greets our eyes
> exactly as she must have greeted theirs:
> every square inch filling in with foliage—
> big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves,
> blue, blue-green, and olive,
> with occasional lighter veins and edges,
> or a satin underleaf turned over;
> monster ferns
> in silver-gray relief,
> and flowers, too, like giant water lilies
> up in the air—up, rather, in the leaves—
> purple, yellow, two yellows, pink,
> rust red and greenish white;
> solid but airy; fresh as if just finished
> and taken off the frame. (91)

This reads at first like one of Bishop's typically wry, elegant landscape poems, full of painterly touches and metaphorically resonant details. What

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complicates its rendering of the Brazilian forest is the dual perspective it establishes, a kind of parallax that superimposes the European colonizers' vision over that of the poem's present-day speaker. This doubleness emerges most clearly in the poem's running conceit of "tapestried landscape" introduced in the epigraph from Kenneth Clark. The initial basis for the comparison of landscape and tapestry, presumably, is the thickly woven and matted texture of the tropical foliage, but it quickly becomes clear that the trope has much broader implications. A European art form often depicting a *paysage moralisé*, the language of tapestry here figures the forcible imposition of a Christian ideology on the native culture. The terms of this imposition become clear in the second stanza, as the landscape is made to bear the weight of the invaders' moral doctrines. "Still in the foreground there is Sin": The importation of absolute categories like sin or, a line earlier, the allegorical opposition "pure-colored" and "spotted" is, Bishop implies, itself an act of violence that precedes and determines the more literal atrocities perpetrated on the natives. Her account of conquest and subjugation shrewdly avoids the kind of frontal narrative we expect from historical poetry; instead she weaves her tale of imperial violence into the poem's artfully layered descriptive language.

There is much more to be said about Bishop's poem, particularly its brilliant closing passage. But let me first set beside it another poem by Rich that offers a more contemporary narrative of power and violence. Where Bishop is oblique and ironic in her engagement with historical fact, Rich is characteristically direct, almost documentary in style. Yet like Bishop, Rich is quick to acknowledge the problems of perspective that shadow any effort to represent history, even when that history is as recent as yesterday's news. The poem in question is called "Frame":

> Winter twilight. She comes out of the lab-
> oratory, last class of the day
> a pile of notebooks slung in her knapsack, coat
> zipped high against the already swirling
> evening sleet. The wind is wicked and the
> busses slower than usual. On her mind
> is organic chemistry and the issue
> of next month's rent and will it be possible to
> bypass the professor with the coldest eyes
> to get a reference for graduate school,
> and whether any of them, even those who smile
> can see, looking at her, a biochemist
> or a marine biologist, which of the faces
> can she trust to see her at all, either today
> or in any future. The busses are worm-slow in the

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quickly gathering dark. *I don't know her. I am*
standing though somewhere just outside the frame
of all this, trying to see. (*Fact* 303)

If the formal trope that governs Bishop's poem is the tapestry, with its thick layering of image, color, and symbol, Rich's formal model is film, in keeping with its contemporary setting. This difference is more than rhetorical, but again reflects the poets' fundamentally divergent conceptions of historical knowledge and its place in art. Where the tapestry of Bishop's poem presents an intricate weave of elements from which no single, clear, unequivocal image emerges, Rich's cinematic mode works through the juxtaposition, montage, cutting and splicing, or, to use a term favored by film theorists, suturing of sharply focused images or "frames." (It's perhaps relevant to note that the frames of a film are transparent or translucent rather than opaque.) The accessibility of raw historical fact thus seems not to be in question for Rich; rather, it's the framing and editing of such fact that presents an epistemological challenge to the poet, one with broadly political consequences.

Rich begins to exploit the parallels between poetic and cinematic form in her opening line with an unusually conspicuous enjambment that has subtle implications for the poem's exploration of perspective and framing: "Winter twilight. She comes out of the lab- / oratory, last class of the day." The hyphenation of "laboratory" might not seem so odd in a poem by, say, Marianne Moore, but Rich is not usually given to prosodic tricks, and so a more thematic explanation seems called for. I would suggest that the hyphen at the end of line 1 marks a seam or suture between two distinct frames whose difference we're meant to feel strongly at this stage of the poem. "Lab" is of course what the "she" of line 1, a student of organic chemistry, calls the place she is leaving, while "laboratory" is a term that suggests greater distance, a more journalistic stance. In passing from line 1 to line 2, then, we're made to experience the disjunction between the student's subjectivity and a more detached, reportorial language. In effect we're reminded that we, like the poem's speaker, stand outside the frame or margin of her experience. Ironically, one by-product of this device is to foreground the encrypted word "oratory" at the beginning of line 2, a term that designates the kind of socially efficacious rhetorical power neither the student nor the narrator has access to. This lack becomes clearest in the poem's climactic passage where we're told over and over that the student's ordeal takes place "in silence." The poem is not so much an oration as a silent witnessing that struggles to cross the threshold into speech and action, yet finds itself repeatedly thwarted by distance, difference, and boundary. Knowing is all too easy in this poem; speaking

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and doing are not. In terms of Rich's aquatic allegory, it's not nearly as hard to dive into the wreck as to bring the wreck back up to the surface.

Another way this poem draws attention to clashing frames of reference is through its deft handling of racial identity. The poem makes no allusion to race until line 32, where we are introduced to "the white man who watches the building." Up to this point, most readers have probably assumed the student to be white, since whiteness serves as the normative or default position in American culture. Not only does Rich force us to revise this assumption, she also does so in a way that reminds us again of our own place outside the frame of the student's experience. Notice that the student's race is never specified, only the race of the white man and, later, the white speaker. Clearly we're being invited to infer that the student is black (while other possibilities certainly exist, the speaker's curt announcement that "This is Boston 1979" tells us a great deal about the poem's racial politics). By making "white" rather than "black" serve as her sole marker of racial difference, Rich emphasizes the otherness of her speaker and, by extension, her white readers rather than her black protagonist. This sense of whiteness as otherness becomes explicit at the end of the poem, when the narrator declares "*What I am telling you / is told by a white woman who they will say / was never there.*" The imagined *they* in these lines may be black or white, with different critiques attaching to each, but in either case they insist on race as another kind of boundary dividing witness from victim, historian from history.

The poem's most graphic figure of division and difference is literally typographic. In a series of italicized passages, the speaker breaks her impersonal, journalistic narration to position herself as a specific subject vis-à-vis the student whose ordeal she reports. The use of italics frames these lines as asides or, more accurately, outsides, utterances occurring on the margin of the central narrative:

> *I don't know her. I am*
> *standing though somewhere just outside the frame*
> *of all this, trying to see.*
> . . . . . .
> *I am standing all this time*
> *just beyond the frame, trying to see.*
> . . . . . .
> *I am standing somewhere at the edge of the frame*
> *watching the man, we are both white, who watches the building*
> *telling her to move on, get out of the hallway.*
> *I can hear nothing because I am not supposed to be*
> *present but I can see her gesturing*
> *out toward the street at the wind-raked curb*

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I see her drawing her small body up
against the implied charges.
. . . . . .
But I am not supposed to be
there. I am just outside the frame
of this action when the anonymous white man
returns with a white police officer.

Both in their emotive substance and their visual form, these passages openly acknowledge the speaker's distance from the scene she is struggling to record. In the process they prevent the poem from becoming a straightforward narrative, neutrally recounting the facts of some particular incident in the mode that has come to be called "poetry of witness." The presence of the italics instead transforms the poem into a more complex reflection on the dynamics of witness, with its volatile balance of distance and identification.[5]

At this point it may be worth noting that the key word in Rich's poem, "frame," which serves as both its title and metaphorical crux, also occurs in Bishop's poem, though with a difference in meaning that is once again broadly instructive. Describing the landscape-tapestry, the speaker of "Brazil, January 1, 1501" tells us it is "solid but airy; fresh as if just finished / and taken off the frame," where "frame" designates the wooden armature on which the tapestry has been woven. In Rich's poem, "frame" refers in the first instance to the camera's segmenting of a continuous scene into a tightly bounded image; but in a more colloquial sense the student in the poem has clearly been "framed" by her accusers, that is, made to appear guilty through the manipulation of context and circumstance. These two meanings of "frame" are complexly intertwined through Rich's analysis of the dynamics of witnessing. As Rich recognizes, and as film theorists have thoroughly established, no spectatorship is neutral; frames of reference, boundaries of prejudice and presupposition, vectors of fear and desire inevitably intervene between gaze and object. In this sense both the poem's speaker/witness and the poet herself are complicitous in the act of framing the poem lays bare.

These fundamentally different modes of framing return us to the poets' contrasting notions of history and its rendering in poetry. For Rich, the frame is a boundary that contains, circumscribes, defines, and delimits historical reality, producing gaps in knowledge that can only be overcome by active imagination. Rich repeatedly informs us in the italicized lines that her speaker/witness stands "outside the frame" of the narrative, occupying a voyeuristic position from which she can see without herself being visible. Yet if the frame excludes and distances, it also serves as a

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window on the real; the act of cinematic or photographic framing presupposes a world that exists apart from and anterior to the frame, a history that can be witnessed and recorded. By contrast, Bishop's tapestry frame serves not as a secondary imposition but as the very support and foundation of historical knowledge, the means whereby it comes into existence. Without the frame there is no tapestry; and without the tapestry, crude and ideologically fraught though it may be, there is no history.[6] The epistemological difference between the two poets thus comes down to a distinction between two kinds of framing: framing as *articulation*, which relies on and gives access to a preexisting stock of empirical data, and as *fabrication*, in which no anterior fact or object can be extracted from the tangled threads of representation and conjecture.[7]

Clearly, Bishop is more skeptical than Rich about the extent to which history can ever be witnessed directly. Where "At the Fishhouses" stressed the affective cost of historical knowledge, the burning and aching it induces in all who partake of it, "Brazil, January 1, 1502" emphasizes its ineluctably mediated character. For Bishop, history is a palimpsest, a densely laminated, opaque artifact that cannot be fully untangled and decoded, while for Rich, history obeys the logic of film rather than tapestry, montage rather than palimpsest. Rich does not, of course, claim that history can ever be known in a wholly unmediated way, but the kind of mediation she recognizes is more liminal than laminar, more a matter of leaving out than piling on. Various kinds of framing may limit or complicate our access to knowledge, but frames can be crossed and even broken by a sufficiently strong-willed spectator. In its second half, Rich's poem traces just such a breaking down of frames or boundaries on a number of levels, as it works to overcome the distance between the poem's narrator and the silent ordeal she reports. Having acknowledged the epistemological difficulties that threaten to undermine the authority of witnessing, Rich moves toward an increasingly active, aggressive mode of vision that burns through all frames and establishes a more immersive relation to history.

A particularly subtle index of this process that links up with the suturing hyphen of line 1 can be found in the two occurrences of the adjective "wind-raked." The first appears in one of the italicized passages: "*I can see her gesturing / out toward the street at the wind-raked curb*" ("Frame" l.39). The second occurs 10 lines later: "Then she starts / to leave into the windraked night" ("Frame" l.49). What's striking though easy to overlook about the word's two appearances is their orthographic inconsistency: The first is hyphenated, the second isn't.[8] The disappearance of this mark of lexical division or suture the second time around appears to be symptomatic of a more widespread closing of gaps as the poem progresses

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to its climax. Two lines after the second "windraked," Rich does away with punctuation completely, instating a more breathless discourse that reflects the mounting violence of the scene. Even more tellingly, the boundary between italicized and nonitalicized speech falls away a few lines later, ironically at the very moment when the speaker recognizes her distance from the scene most fully:

> *. . . I am unable*
> *to hear a sound of all this all that I know is what*
> *I can see from this position there is no soundtrack*
> *to go with this and I understand at once*
> *it is meant to be in silence that this happens*
> in silence that he pushes her into the car
> banging her head in silence that she cries out
> in silence that she tries to explain she was only
> waiting for a bus

The more subjective discourse of the italicized sections here flows seamlessly into the central narrative, suggesting that the careful distinctions and demarcations established earlier—between white and black, victim and witness, poem and history—have broken down. To return to the cinematic analogy (reinforced by Rich's allusion to a missing "soundtrack"), cuts and splices give way to dissolves and pans, more fluid modes of transition and articulation. The anaphoric repetition of "in silence" throughout this closing passage, combined with its lack of punctuation, imparts a rhythmic continuity that supplants disjunction as the poem's governing prosody. In effect, the gaze of the poet/witness has assumed a new freedom to enter and explore the scene of the crime, to cross historical and psychological thresholds and claim a knowledge that escapes the limits of the frame.

The brutalities being recounted here are of course wrenching, yet there is a hidden triumph in these lines as well, one not wholly distinct from the diver's exuberant encounter with the wreck. That note of triumph comes through most clearly in the poem's final lines, which revert to italics and punctuation as if to disengage from the raw immediacy of the student's ordeal: "*What I am telling you / is told by a white woman who they will say / was never there. I say I am there.*" This last sentence unmistakably echoes Whitman's great boast of imaginative identification in *Song of Myself*: "I am the man, I suffered, I was there." Like Whitman, Rich insists on her power to know the other's pain and the injustices that produced it. Having acknowledged and inscribed the many forms of liminality and boundary that separate her from the student's experience, Rich's speaker ends by defiantly asserting her presence within the scene she is recording. The

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poem dramatizes the gradual overcoming of experiential and representational distances, breaking down the frames and barriers that divide poet from history, achieving a nearly visionary immersion in the icy water of what happens.

Let me return now to Bishop's poem in order to compare its ending to Rich's. For all their obvious differences of setting and style, the two poems share a common narrative: In both, powerful armed men chase down, subdue, and physically abuse women of another race. In Bishop's poem, however, the actual violation occurs discreetly offstage, outside the frame or tableau:

> Just so the Christians, hard as nails,
> tiny as nails, and glinting,
> in creaking armor, came and found it all,
> not unfamiliar:
> no lovers' walks, no bowers,
> no cherries to be picked, no lute music,
> but corresponding, nevertheless,
> to an old dream of wealth and luxury
> already out of style when they left home—
> wealth, plus a brand-new pleasure.
> Directly after Mass, humming perhaps
> *L'Homme armé* or some such tune,
> they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
> each out to catch an Indian for himself—
> those maddening little women who kept calling,
> calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
> and retreating, always retreating, behind it.

There is a pathos in these last lines that derives partly from our knowledge that the women will not escape their hunters, though the poem allows them to defer indefinitely the moment of capture. But it is also the pathos of history itself, continually retreating or receding from our view behind the layers of fabrication that transmit it to us. One could no doubt ascribe Bishop's refusal to show the rape itself to temperamental squeamishness on her part, to be contrasted with Rich's fierce candor on such matters, but I think more is at work here than simply temperament. The aporia or ellipsis with which her poem ends is Bishop's way of saying "I am not there," rejecting the Whitmanesque urge to claim she is that fuels Rich's poem. Indeed, the poignancy of Bishop's poem stems in large measure precisely from the irrecoverability of these native women's lives and histories; there is no wreck, no "evidence of damage," no testimonial relic to tell us with any completeness who they were and what they suffered. Their voices persist only as faint echoes retreating behind a tapestry.

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As it happens, Rich herself discusses "Brazil, January 1, 1502" in her review of Bishop's posthumous *Complete Poems,* "Elizabeth Bishop: The Eye of the Outsider." Rather than looking at Rich's rather perfunctory comments on Bishop's poem, I want to take note of the way she quotes the poem, which is much more revealing of the profound differences between these two poets. Unsurprisingly Rich focuses on the final section of the poem, but she produces a radically abridged version that omits much of Bishop's distinctive style:

> Just so the Christians, hard as nails . . .
> in creaking armor, came and found it all,
> not unfamiliar. . . .
> Directly after Mass . . .
> they ripped away into the hanging fabric,
> each out to catch an Indian for himself—
> those maddening little women who kept calling
> calling to each other (or had the birds waked up?)
> and retreating, always retreating, behind it. ("Eye" 132)

While Rich may well have had space constraints to worry about, her cuts betray a certain impatience with Bishop's oblique, playful approach to this scene, a desire to "cut to the chase," so to speak, to penetrate the veils of irony, allusion, and digression the poem establishes. It would perhaps be too glib to suggest that Rich transforms the passage from a Bishop to a Rich text—still more radical surgery would be needed for that—but she does succeed in flattening out Bishop's tonal complexity in a way that makes the bare bones of the narrative more prominent, and seems to offer an unambiguous glimpse of history's nightmare.

Perhaps the most telling elision in Rich's quotation is the first: After quoting "Just so the Christians, hard as nails," she leaves out the line that follows, "tiny as nails, and glinting." Since only a single line is elided here, I think we're entitled to take the omission as more than a space-saving device. What gets lost is an absolutely characteristic Bishop touch, namely, the transformation of a tired cliché, "hard as nails," into a trope that abruptly alters our perspective: "tiny as nails, and glinting." One can only surmise that Rich considered this turn an unnecessary rhetorical flourish with the unwanted effect of diminishing the Christians and the threat they represent. Rather than working toward a unified perspective from which a narrative of colonial oppression comes sharply into focus, Bishop's trope superimposes another angle of vision on the scene that prevents us from seeing it as a stark conflict of power and innocence: Instead of looming menacingly over the natives, the European invaders are made to seem faintly comic and insectlike in their "creaking armour."

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Yet far from undermining the horror of the scene, Bishop's trope deepens it, in part by giving an implicit motivation for the conquerors' will to dominate—tininess can breed compensatory sadism—and in part by showing them to be mere details in a historical tapestry that extends well beyond them. By foregrounding and literalizing the image of "nails," Bishop also releases its New Testament associations, deftly underscoring the implicit irony of Christians as crucifiers. All these dimensions of meaning come, to be sure, at the expense of a clearly defined tone or attitude, the kind of hot political urgency that dominates Rich's own poetry. It's therefore not hard to see why Rich felt compelled to dampen the more playful elements of Bishop's language.[9]

Many other instances of Bishop's tonal indeterminacy in the poem can be cited: A phrase like "lovely hell-green flames," for example, seems to knot the speaker's casually aesthetic vision and the violently moralizing perspective of the conquistadors into a single dense fabric that refuses to specify whose gaze we're inhabiting. But the clearest illustration of the tonal disparities between the two poets can be found in another word that occurs in both poems, again with very different connotations. In "Frame" we're told, not once but twice, that "the wind is wicked," presumably to explain why the student feels the need to seek shelter. Describing the "five sooty dragons" that form part of her allegorical tableau, Bishop writes: "The lizards scarcely breathe; all eyes / are on the smaller, female one, back-to, / her wicked tail straight up and over, / red as a red-hot wire." Where Rich's "wicked" seems relatively straightforward in its displacement of hostility toward the student from the social to the natural realm, reinforcing the broader moral dichotomies at work in the poem, Bishop's "wicked" is complexly ironic. Again we're being forced to look through the eyes of the Christian invaders, to see the Brazilian landscape in their rigidly allegorical and moral terms. (Bishop is probably playing on the noun "wick" as well, an object the lizard's tail resembles, both in its upright posture and its "red-hot" state.) The stigmatizing of female sexuality implicit in the word clearly belongs to the same ethos that justifies the Europeans' rape of the native women, whose heathen "wickedness" presumably cries out for retribution.

By layering dissonant tones and meanings in this way, Bishop produces a strikingly different kind of historical poem from Rich, one less unified in tone and effect, more open to slippery shifts of valence and perspective. As a result she can sound detached, at times even faintly amused in her treatment of history, especially when compared with a ferociously engaged poet like Rich. Yet "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is finally no less steeped in rage at history's brutality than "Frame." The much greater chronological

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distance between observer and event in Bishop's poem obviously makes a considerable difference in the way she approaches her material, but this is simply a difference in degree that reinforces a much more basic conceptual difference in the two poets' attitudes toward historical knowledge. Both recognize that poetry and history inhabit fundamentally different spheres, that the poet always stands at a distance, outside the frame. But they disagree on how much and what kind of historical knowledge a poem can legitimately claim. These radically different assumptions produce poems with distinct and complementary virtues: in Bishop's case a representational and tonal texture of enormous subtlety and complexity, delicately poised between identification and irony; in Rich's case a highly sophisticated deployment of form and language to register the passionate acts of crossing, knowing, and declaring that her poems undertake. To insist that these differences in their views of poetry and its relation to history mean we must choose between them, however, is a mistake. Many readers would not willingly part with either poet's work, and indeed it's precisely for their differences that we need them both. Reading them together, we're led to weigh the competing claims of an aggressive witnessing that dives into the wreck of history to salvage what is found there, and a more restrained, skeptical imagining that tests the waters for faint traces of the past, while recognizing that its truth is forever "flowing, and flown."

NOTES

[1] Despite their comparable prominence, mutual respect, and shared regional and institutional affiliations, Bishop and Rich have almost never been directly compared. Indeed critics of contemporary poetry can be roughly divided into Bishop and Rich readers, each with their own presuppositions and frames of reference. Bishop tends to be grouped with meditative ironists like Stevens and Ashbery or with autobiographical poets like Lowell and Merrill; when treated as a woman writer she is generally located in a tradition of contemplative and descriptive poets that extends from her mentor Marianne Moore to May Swenson, Amy Clampitt, and Mary Oliver. Rich is more commonly placed alongside activist poets like Muriel Rukeyser and Audre Lorde, or mythopoeic feminists like Sylvia Plath and Denise Levertov. The few studies that give a prominent place to both Bishop and Rich, like James McCorkle's *The Still Performance* and David Kalstone's *Five Temperaments*, segregate them into separate chapters and offer little if any cross-referencing between them. Part of my aim in this essay is therefore to open a long-overdue dialogue between their works that may clarify both what divides them and what themes and tropes they share.

[2] Rich argues for the political force of a number of Bishop's poems in her essay "The Eye of the Outsider." Rich also comments more briefly on Bishop in her recent *What Is Found There*. Betsy Erkkila's essay "Elizabeth Bishop, Mod-

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ernism, and the Left" makes a more concerted attempt to situate Bishop's work in relation to leftist politics, particularly in the 30s and 60s.

[3] Ross Leckie also argues for a more concrete and particular understanding of history in the poem than is generally assumed. Leckie emphasizes the broad economic implications of the poem's first half, with its portrait of a declining village industry that has presumably fallen victim to larger commercial interests.

[4] Comparing "At the Fishhouses" with Marianne Moore's sea poem "A Grave," Robin Riley Fast suggests that Bishop's poem "enacts a sustained effort to approach the sea," positing "a kind of immersion that is not inevitable but both frightening and delightful" (367). While Bishop is certainly more ambivalently drawn to the sea than is Moore, who characterizes it in purely destructive terms, it would be difficult to claim that she ends by advocating immersion, despite calling herself a "believer." In this respect she could be said to occupy a point midway between Moore and Rich, neither gazing at the sea from a safe distance with detached repugnance nor donning a wet suit and plunging into its depths. Both cognitively and physically she remains on the margin, where the forces of repulsion and attraction achieve a paralyzing equilibrium.

[5] It's worth comparing "Frame" with an earlier Rich poem, "Rape," which originally appeared in the volume *Diving Into the Wreck*. The latter is much less self-conscious in its language of witness and has been justly criticized for its use of shallow stereotypes, its indiscriminate demonizing of authority, and its unreflective presumption of total knowledge (see Nelson 152–53 and Vendler 243). By contrast, "Frame" seems to me much more judicious; tellingly, Rich chooses not to speculate on the male figures' motives, and while they remain shadowy and sinister emblems of racism, the speaker's repeated acknowledgment of her own liminal perspective prevents them from hardening into caricatures. Indeed, I suspect Rich wrote "Frame" with criticism of poems like "Rape" in mind.

[6] Commenting on Bishop's early poem "The Map," with its famous declaration "More delicate than the historian's are the mapmaker's colors," Betsy Erkkila writes: "Complicating the truth claims of '30s debates about the relation between aesthetics and politics, Bishop suggests that the mapmaker's art, like any art, is historically embedded and that history is, correspondingly, always and already mapped and interpreted" (287).

[7] In Bishop's poetry, knowledge of the past is inevitably mediated by conventional or stylized representations, whether maps, pictures in *National Geographic*, or amateur paintings. As a result, her meditations on history are always simultaneously meditations on the conventions and flaws of the particular representation that conveys it to us. Rich's historical poems tend to treat representations more straightforwardly, as pieces of documentary evidence to be assembled into a compelling narrative form; see, for example, "Paula Becker to Clara Westhoff" and "Culture and Anarchy" (*Fact* 248–50, 275–78). In poems like these, Rich refuses to let herself be distracted by representation per se, finding in it relatively transparent access to the lived past she wishes to reconstruct.

[8] This variation occurs both in the poem's first book publication, in *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*, and in its reprinting in *The Fact of a Doorframe*,

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so it's presumably not a printer's error.

[9] Some critics, including David Bromwich, have suggested that as an outsider in Brazil, Bishop was more likely to identify with the Christians than with the native women. Responding to a version of this essay, Helen Vendler reinforced this view by suggesting that Bishop's Brazilian lover Lota Macedo Soares may well have seemed to the poet at times like one of the "maddening little women" in the poem. I'm inclined to agree with Lorrie Goldensohn's more balanced description of the poem's perspective:

> For David Bromwich, the speaker of the poem identifies with those hard, tiny little Christians: a problematic reading because it understresses the feminist, antimilitaristic point of view of the poem emerging in satire against the imperialist machismo of armored soldiers. And yet the poem resists a too-insistently framed ideology: an identifiable, controlling perspective, coming from a speaker clearly and continuously in command of the poem's opinions, seems to be missing. (199)

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Challenge and Response: The Changing Face of Theater in South Africa

André Brink

In his introduction to the published version of *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead,* Athol Fugard summarized his approach to the shaping of the play (in close collaboration with the two actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona) as "challenge and response": challenges thrown out by the director, to which the actors were invited to respond; challenges devised by the actors, to which the director had to invent a response. But once it went into performance, *Sizwe Bansi* itself became a challenge to which audiences responded—a response often so dramatic that some performances of a play initially intended to last for 60 minutes or so continued for up to 3 hours. In other words, here the audience reaction posed a challenge to which the play-in-performance responded by changing its own shape. And if one takes another step back, *Sizwe Bansi* as a whole may be viewed as a theatrical response to the very complicated and dynamic sociopolitical situation that may be summarized as "apartheid." At the same time, the performances of the play, as of other plays by Fugard and other dramatists, black and white, posed a challenge to which the apartheid situation, and the regime controlling it, were forced to find new responses. In short, Fugard's play illustrates a highly textured dialectic in which much of the functioning of the arts, but most pertinently of theater, during the apartheid era was foregrounded.

This paper focuses on different expressions of this dialectic in different phases and on different social and cultural levels of South Africa under apartheid. In this way I hope to arrive at an evaluation of the critical new challenges faced by theater in the country today. My focus on South Africa

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does not mean that I have any wish to inflate the importance or the significance of theater in what for many must be a geographically remote place, at first sight perhaps peripheral to the theater of the West. But I hope that by looking at the complexity of the two-way challenge-and-response relationship in one specific context, some questions about the possible place and function of theater in today's world at large may be illuminated.

Two of the terms I have just used need early clarification. The relationship between theater and society works in (at least) two directions, because nobody in her or his right mind would suggest that theater, or any other form of art for that matter, can ever be "explained" as a mere response to a mere challenge. Certainly, in South Africa at least, as the playwright Zakes Mda recently emphasized in "Current Trends in Theater-for-Development in South Africa," theater has not only responded to challenges but also has become, itself, a catalyst for social and political change.

The second term I wish to emphasize is the matter of questions, rather than answers. For I hold with the poet Allan Vizents that "an artist is a problem finder, not a problem solver."

It is necessary, at the outset, to have some understanding of the constraints placed on theater under apartheid. First of all, and most obviously, until a comparatively late stage, neither audiences nor casts could be mixed, except by special permit. This meant that, by and large, white experience had to be interpreted to white audiences by white actors in theaters designated for whites only. Black theatrical presentations were predominantly confined to black audiences, more often than not without any of the facilities (lighting, costumes, sound effects, even a decent auditorium, even a stage) which white theater would regard as a sine qua non. And theater for so-called "coloured" people, like most of life's other experiences, found itself somewhere between that of the two main groups—usually characterized by the same deprivation as black theater, but sometimes with slightly improved facilities, as at the Three Arts Theater or in the Eoan Opera Group in Cape Town.

Even within the separate groups, censorship imposed further restrictions. Some of the most daring cultural opposition to the political establishment came from within theater, and actors, directors, even management in the (all-white) performing arts councils of the different provinces (particularly in the Orange Free State) often made commendable efforts to challenge apartheid in their productions. But open confrontation in *this* milieu was a nonstarter, because a single complaint from the public

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(and the moral and political right made sure that their representatives were planted in most audiences) could set the censorship process in motion, either by banning plays and performances or by securing the intervention of political leaders, particularly the administrators of the provinces (who were ex officio members, often chairpersons, of the Performing Arts Councils). The banning of a book was always a sickening experience, and often costly, but theater was infinitely more exposed to the workings of official or unofficial censorship than literature, and given the cost of even a run-of-the-mill production, the mere possibility of a ban was usually enough to nip it in the bud.

The cultural boycott also had its effect, and as more and more playwrights of international repute refused permission (with good reason) for their plays to be staged in South Africa, the choice of texts with a challenging content became ever more restricted. White playwrights, in English and Afrikaans, were faced with the increasing certainty that anything they wrote that might be regarded as a threat or a challenge to the regime would never reach the stage. During the 1970s, most of the new dramatists who had made their debut during the previous decade either stopped writing altogether or switched to bland, innocuous entertainment.

A friend of mine, at the time the executive officer of one of the Performing Arts Councils, once confronted a cabinet minister (who is at present facing charges of murder in court—itself the material for a play) who demanded that all "inflammatory" material be banned from his stage. Even from the minister's own framework of reference, my friend argued, surely it would be better to allow the theater to act as a safety valve rather than force resentment underground. "Either you do something about it, or I will," was the minister's curt reply. "Do you want me to shoot them all?"

This was power in its crudest form. But as the administration of apartheid evolved through the eras of Verwoerd, Vorster, and Botha, certain changes did take place, under the pressure of ever-increasing resistance from within the country and from abroad. In order to survive, the apartheid state needed, more and more, the goodwill of powerful collaborators like Thatcher, Reagan, and Kohl. And so, as the regime grew more sophisticated, it attempted to harness culture in its service, rather than to alienate it too brutally or too obviously. During the 70s and 80s, vast theater complexes in modern and postmodern versions of the Nuremberg style were erected in most urban centers, endowed with the most up-to-date equipment available in the world. But because these state-subsidized mausoleums were so expensive to run, they inevitably resorted

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to productions of which the box office success was a foregone conclusion: huge musical extravaganzas, tried and trusted classics, practically all of them imported from abroad.

At the same time, in a desperate attempt to use the available space, each of these complexes began to run experimental programs in small venues and workshop surroundings within the mausoleums. And although much of this activity remained within a small "in" group, a remarkable amount of politically challenging theater began to flow through these venues, in the very auricles and ventricles of the establishment.

Much of this, reviewed in the cold light of postapartheid South Africa, may now appear curiously tame or tentative. But one should bear in mind that in those electrically charged times, when every word was suspect, when even in the most fleeting allusion the security police or its many informers might pick up a hint of subversion, a time when *Black Beauty* was banned because the title was read as a sign of miscegenation and the peace sign was outlawed as it was believed to invoke the Devil, audiences often needed very little prompting to discover second or third layers of latent meaning in a text.

Moreover, in the late 70s and the 80s,, when the state machinery was challenged more and more overtly—in the schools and universities, in the churches, on factory floors, in the front organizations that carried out the work of banned liberation movements—the country was ironically fortunate in having as its president a man wholly innocent of culture. Beleaguered from all sides, he dismissed the possibility of any real threat emanating from the theater, literature, or the arts generally. As a result, a veritable cultural explosion erupted in the country, communicating and amplifying the processes of contestation in the most remote and deprived communities. And theater was central to this experience.

This was particularly true of black theater, which was at once more targetable and less vulnerable to persecution by the state and its host of agents. Black theater was more targetable because any act of commission or omission in the black community which might, by whatever stretch of a suspicious imagination, be construed as a threat to white authority was pounced upon with incomparably more alacrity and violence than anything produced in white society. Black theater was less vulnerable because it was often performed on a fly-by-night basis, hugely inventive in its means and mobile in its movements, and could literally flit from one venue to another, unfettered by formal constraints of stage and lighting and auditorium. This was the world from which my novel *Looking on Darkness* was drawn. Wherever an empty space could be found or improvised, a play could be performed. By word of mouth, an audience could assemble,

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within minutes, from shacks and shanties and bushes and hideouts. And at the first intimation of approaching police, everybody, audience and actors, could disperse just as swiftly. Even so, inevitably, people were often arrested, detained, beaten up, or harassed. But far from being discouraged, most of them were inspired by such persecution to feats of ever more daring proportions.

Very little record of this "theater of extremity" has survived, as both actors and audience would erase all evidence about the event as soon as it was over. Texts were almost never committed to paper; for its efficacy, this theater relied exclusively on the immediacy and the urgency of the contact.

But if this kind of event and the productions of official companies marked two extremes of theater under apartheid, there was a fascinating sliding scale in between. Veering toward the formal extreme were theaters on the university campuses, or in unprepossessing private venues, cramped or cavernous as the case may be, where some of the most exciting and challenging plays of the 60s, 70s, and 80s were performed: The Space in Cape Town, the Market in Johannesburg. Very often, despite all attempts at official intervention, these productions would have mixed casts; to the constant rage of the authorities, multiracial audiences, too, defied bannings, harassment, and prosecution. Veering toward the informal extreme were productions, mainly by black groups like the Serpent Players of Fugard, Kani, and Ntshona, in school or community halls in the townships. Even in prison, on Robben Island, plays were performed, and it is known that Nelson Mandela took part in a production of *Antigone*—the very production later recreated by Fugard and his associates in *The Island*. In the process, too, theater became one of the very few vehicles through which something of the black experience could be communicated to white audiences. In this respect, the work of playwrights like Zakes Mda, Khayalethu Mqayisa, Matsemela Manaka, Fatima Dike, and others fulfilled a role of inestimable importance.

It means that theater, often allied to spectacles of dance and music and poetry readings, became one of the great focal points of popular conscientization and resistance against apartheid. Performances, however harrowing the subject matter often was, were occasions of celebration—the celebration of an unquenchable community spirit, of solidarity within a state of oppression. Such experiences cannot be quantified. But at a time when overt political action in black communities was largely proscribed, theater not only "spread the message" but also became, in the process, the message itself.

In the context of postmodernism in the United States and Europe, it

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may be entirely understandable for a theater personality like Robert Wilson to say: "I am not interested in changing the world through theater. I'm giving people invitations to daydreams." In South Africa, under apartheid, conditions differed vastly from those confronted by Wilson: Within a closed society, where the daily drama of existence permits of little daydreaming, theater almost naturally assumes a more urgent and vital role.

This functioning of theater against apartheid was by no means uniform, whether in shape or in content or in approach—which means that the very notion of "challenge and response" becomes even more complicated than it seemed at first.

First of all, of course, one has to consider the convergence of two great traditions of performance in the South African theater: the African and the western. From indigenous African sources, we have derived a penchant for storytelling (comparable in some ways, perhaps, to the tradition of medieval itinerant bards in Europe): an animated narrative often complemented by music. And, from another indigenous source, dance is joined to the performance; often it engulfs the whole production, obliterating the boundaries between actors and audience. Linked to an early appreciation of American musical performance, at a time when the so-called *Drum* generation of the 50s and early 60s in Johannesburg turned largely to American sources in dance halls and films, this erupted in one of the first theatrical exports from South Africa to the world outside: *King Kong*, which introduced foreign audiences to, among others, Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masekela. This, in turn, inspired Gibson Kente's early township musicals—in themselves "unpolitical" but affirming black identity and the black experience as a point of departure for many subsequent theatrical celebrations, among them the huge international successes *Woza Albert!*, *Asinamali,* and *Sarafina*.

But there was also a downside to this kind of theatrical flowering: Targeting an audience abroad, specifically a Broadway audience, inevitably removed the focus from the very here-and-now that originally inspired such productions. And in due course, as a playwright like Mbongeni Ngema turned toward mere political opportunism, relinquishing both ethical and theatrical integrity in the process, this did more harm than good both to the struggle against apartheid and to the status of theater in South Africa. The fact that at present his pen appears to be at the disposal of any cause provided the money is right, sadly raises questions about his early achievements against apartheid.

More significant, in theatrical terms, and in the long run, was the kind of Grotowskian "poor theater" stimulated by the struggle for

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liberation. Forced by circumstances to renounce all the trappings of conventional theater, and returning to the basics of the performance situation—an empty space, a poor fork'd creature, an audience, and a story that is the product of the interaction of these forces—this theater has produced some images as emblematic, in the minds of those who witnessed them, as those that have become part of our twentieth-century collective consciousness: Vladimir and Estragon under their bare tree; Winnie up to her waist, up to her neck, in muck; Willie Loman in the skeleton of a house; a courtroom in Salem; a glass menagerie; Jimmy Porter beside his ironing wife; a caretaker sitting on his rickety single bed. In South African theater, we have Ngema's image of two black men, one wearing a white Ping-Pong ball on his nose; we have Mda's desolate hill that serves as point of arrival from and departure to the hell of the mines. From Fugard's repertoire we have a man and a woman trudging through endless space, two prisoners pushing wheelbarrows, a black man and a white woman trapped in the flare of a police camera, an old woman surrounded by multicolored shards of glass, and so on.

Different *phases* in the struggle for liberation are represented in these images. In the wake of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 and the first massive bannings of individuals and organizations, when in one stroke all access for blacks to ordinary political activity was annihilated, theater gradually began to move into the breach. For more than a decade, it expressed itself in Protest Theater, much of it in the form of representing black oppression: To black audiences, it defined and interpreted the extent and nature of their own suffering; to whites, it offered some of the first images of what it meant to live beyond the great divide. Most of Fugard's achievement can be approached in this context, drawing as he did on his close association with black actors in their own environment, a world that had been (and regrettably continued to be), for many whites, a closed book and a space of darkness.

If Fugard opened the door to many a white conscience in the process, this very approach is what many critics hold against him: the allegation that protest is not translated into resistance, and that, in plays like *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*, for all their theatrical efficacy, there is ultimately no way out.[1] This specific play is constructed in two circles: the story of the photographer Styles and that of his clients Sizwe Bansi. The first beats the system by playing fully within it; the second cheats his way out by adopting a dead man's identity to win a temporary reprieve. But the two tightly closed circles of the action suggest that, ultimately, the system itself, apartheid, cannot be defeated.

And indeed, the play veers more toward existentialism than toward

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théâtre engagé, but at the same time its existentialism is of a peculiar kind. One is reminded of the incisive and disturbing *Mashangu's Reverie* by the psychologist-philosopher Noel Chabani Manganyi, in which he argues:

> Sisyphus is the absurd hero. Pushing the rock uphill is the price I pay . . . for what? I am not Camus, nor am I the West. I the black Sisyphus am social—not metaphysical. It is the social which constitutes the horizon of my futile labour. Going downhill I come face to face with the social—my tormentors. I make the only logical jump I know, i.e., ignoring suicide in favour of something so painfully pragmatic—murder. (16)

In a sense Fugard remains loyal to Camus, who is indeed one of the crucial inspirations of his work. But to see *Sizwe Bansi* as being trapped in its own vicious circle is to ignore that it is *a play* and that theater involves the interaction—the mutual challenges and responses—between actor and audience. If Sizwe the man remains trapped in the system, the clarity of vision and the passion of representation with which the play is communicated to its audience suggest the *breaking* of the deadly circle. If Sizwe can do nothing about his condition, the audience *can*. It is not for nothing that Brecht, too, hovers in the background: Life is not a fate to be endured but a situation that can be changed. And the almost delirious reaction of many black audiences who saw *Sizwe Bansi* during the apartheid years testifies to its liberating effect, which goes far beyond mere protest.

Even so, there is a distinct break between these earlier forms of Protest Theater and the Theater of Resistance that arose during the 70s, especially after the black youth revolt of 1976 that spread through the whole country and whose ripple effects continued until the move toward democracy effectively began in 1990. If, very often, the "private ache" was an integral part of the larger social and political problematic explored in Protest Theater, the plays written in the context of the struggle for liberation after 1976 were almost pure agitprop—in the worst *and* best senses of the term. Certainly, as feminists discovered long before everyone else, in the post-1976 climate the private *was* the political, and to attempt a distinction, appeared—especially to black writers—something of a luxury.[2]

Of course there always remains the caveat not to confuse, as during the apartheid years so many inevitably did, the righteousness of a cause or the impact of good intentions with dramatic or aesthetic quality. But our concern at the moment is contextual: the kind of play that has been produced in response to a specific conjuncture of circumstances.

Many of these plays were conceived, produced, and received purely as combative strategies, as moves within a struggle for political liberation. To comment to such a dramatist that a particular scene in one of his or

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her plays was "beautiful" would provoke the inevitable comment: "Then there must be something wrong with my play. I do not write it for people to reflect on its 'beauty' but to be inspired to *act*."

Yet a number of these plays have retained sufficient dramatic and human density still to hold audiences in thrall. Among them are, especially, Ngema's *Woza Albert!,* with its wonderful apocalyptic exuberance, and *Asinamali*, in which even the gloom of prison provides occasion for the celebration of an ineradicable humanity. There are also some of Zakes Mda's plays that may survive the transition to (more or less) normality, among them *The Road*, in which a white farmer and a black laborer meet in Beckettian space to explore what binds and what separates them. What such plays, at their best, do convey is a sense of the inventiveness of *play* and the density of circumstance, the relationship between the internal and the external—something that *may* be dissipated, if not altogether lost, in many plays at the other extreme of the spectrum.

There is a third category of plays one may note, as a response to the deprivations and depredations of apartheid, and that is what Mda (1996) terms "Theater-for-Development": Instead of confronting, head-on, the politics of the situation, these attempt to awaken or expand community awareness of specific social issues—and it is not difficult to understand why this form of theater has continued to flourish after the dismantling of apartheid. In order to "catch up" in many areas where apartheid has left whole communities far behind in terms of education and health, theater is brought in as a tool to raise awareness. In terms of theatrical experience, the value of such productions lay in their audience involvement rather than the "top-to-bottom" effect of agitprop. But, so far at least, this has not yet led to the exploration of larger or new dimensions of theatrical experience: The targets have been too fixed and narrow, the "message" too obvious. And at least in one extreme case, Ngema's disastrous extravaganza *Sarafina II*, it has ended in spectacular failure: in theatrical terms, because of its reliance on archetypal showbiz shamelessly borrowed from (the worst of) Broadway; in practical and moral terms because it had very little to do with its stated aim (inculcating AIDS awareness) and everything with self-enrichment and self-aggrandizement at the expense of the poorest and most-deprived sections of the community.

On the one hand, theater under apartheid has undergone various forms of impoverishment: in black theater, a narrowing-down of focus and of theatrical means and, in much of white theater, a continual resort to tactics of evasion—spectacle at the cost of dramatic texture or the scale and depth of human experience. On the other hand, the context of oppression, the presence of a very real, very visible enemy, the need to

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exploit all one's human resources to the utmost in responding to the lies and distortions, the violence and the brutality and brutishness of an inhuman system—in short, the need to use (among many other things) theater in order to stay human in an inhuman situation—fostered a resourcefulness and an intoxicating sense of creativity in the theater. It also stimulated a rare solidarity among audiences and actors, an acknowledgment of a common experience shared by all, a threat posed to all alike, and a challenge requiring an effective response (in terms of emotion, of affirmation, of strategies for survival) which inspired the community as a whole and made it worthwhile not to give up the struggle. And this experience of sharing has remained, for all of us once caught in it, one of the most rewarding discoveries of our lives.

But now the country has been liberated, and in spite of all manner of growing pains South Africa is adapting to a new way of life. After the euphoria following the first free elections of 1994, we are coming to grips with a number of very basic realities: The mindsets of yesterday have not disappeared overnight, nor have the habits of openness, civic liberty, and democracy come easily. But the simple fact is that the situation has changed radically, and yesterday's theater no longer meets the demands of today. It is a dilemma identical to that faced by all the recently liberated societies of Africa, of Latin America, of Central Europe. And of course it is not limited to theater. Three years ago, when I first had the great pleasure of attending a Salzburg seminar to explore, with about 60 writers and academics from those recently liberated countries, the possibilities of literature as a political force, we found that behind the relief and joy of liberation hovered a strange nostalgia for those good-bad old days of repression and censorship, of *zamishdat* and clandestine plotting to outwit the authorities and reach out to our readers. Since then, this has become a widely recognized phenomenon, in South Africa as much as in the new Germany, in the Czech Republic or Poland or Bulgaria as in the Argentine or Chili, in Kenya as in Russia. And are there not signs of the same malaise—a dropping-off of enthusiasm for the arts—in the traditionally open societies of the West as well?

In South Africa, a particular barometer for the status of theater has been, for many years now, the Grahamstown Festival of the Arts, which, from humble beginnings in the early 70s, has become a cultural showcase where all the arts, but theater in particular, moved from the periphery to the center of national attention. For two weeks every year, this festival came to take center stage in the news. Especially during the 80s, as apartheid moved through its final and most awful convulsions, the stage

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in Grahamstown was a space where the political authorities did not care to interfere. The most provocative and outrageous challenges to the ideology and institutions of apartheid emanated from the many formal and informal, mainstream and fringe platforms of the festival. Perhaps, in a sense, if one looks at it with a jaded eye, it was merely a great communal annual catharsis that made it possible to return to the yoke afterward. But I honestly believe it was more than self-indulgence, and the increasing involvement of traditionally deprived, black communities in the festival became a significant demonstration of resistance that could not but warn the authorities that their time was running out. Practically without exception, the plays staged at the festival during the second half of the 80s were political, mostly overtly so. Audiences packed the venues as if they couldn't get enough.

But from 1990—that is, since the liberation of Mandela and the beginning of the transition toward democracy—the enthusiasm for political plays at the festival began to wane. At the same time, the Market Theater, traditionally the powerhouse of theatrical resistance to apartheid in Johannesburg, began to lose its audiences. People were, quite simply, sick and tired of being force-fed on apartheid. At the festival, and elsewhere, theater began to focus on a host of other issues: gay liberation, AIDS, repressed sexuality, the oppression of women, Afrikaner guilt, and the dark secrets cloaked by a tradition of dour Calvinism. Where politics persisted, it was mainly in the form of satire rather than a straight examination of issues. These new trends, during the years of transition, have indeed produced a handful of first-rate plays, among them the brilliant and inventive work of Paul Slabolepszy, who, in plays like *Saturday Night at the Palace*, *Mooi Street Moves*, and *The Return of Elvis du Pisanie*, has become, in the words of the critic Robert Greig (in the introduction to Slabolepszy vii), "the cartographer of the white male soul facing the abyss."

There has also been a measure of promise in the work of the Afrikaans playwright Reza de Wet, even though her work often lacks the kind of vision or the courage of invention that makes true theater memorable. In her most ambitious work to date, she explores a form of magic realism, notably in a play like *Mirakel* (*Miracle*) that returns to religious and medieval sources of theater. Her latest play, *Drie Susters Twee* (*Three Sisters Two*), is a clever but rather futile exercise in relocating Chekhov in the period just after the Bolshevik Revolution. While some obvious parallels with postapartheid South Africa are nicely presented, the play suffers from a quaint old-fashionedness in the attempt, not so much to update as to restate the original *Three Sisters*, and even more so in the tenuous ideological substratum of the play, namely, the undisguised nostalgia for a past when

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the upper classes (read "white supremacists") had exclusive access to the good life, before revolutionary (read "black") upstarts spoiled it all. Unlike numerous modernist and postmodernist predecessors, ranging from Sartre's *Les Mouches* to Anouilh's *Antigone*, or from Williams's *Orpheus Descending* to Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, de Wet does not set out to relativize, revitalize, or deconstruct an earlier model but merely to copy it, in the way generations of art students copy the masterpieces of the National Gallery, the Louvre, or the Met to hone their skills.

On the whole, public enthusiasm for theater at the Grahamstown Festival, and indeed in most of the large centers, has begun to wane; productions have become more and more weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. And the only notable recent successes have been productions of plays imported from abroad.

Of course, one should not expect too much too soon. Theater is notorious for the time it takes to digest the world, to distill essences from it; and we are only two years into the new experience. Even so, it does seem to be a particularly tricky challenge to respond to. South Africa is not alone in this, but there are factors that peculiarly compound our situation, defining the challenge to theater in several very specific ways.

Emerging from a long history of colonial marginalization, and more particularly from almost five decades of tyranny that brutalized the mind in many more respects than just the political, it is only now that we can take the measure of our past isolation. For almost 50 years, while the rest of the world has made astounding strides and leaps in theater, we have been nurturing the effects of inbreeding. And the influence of directors sporadically imported from abroad (usually, for obvious reasons, not the most innovative or imaginative of their kind) has on the whole been negligible. Technical equipment alone cannot solve the problem of ossified thinking. The whole explosion of postmodernist theater has, so far, largely bypassed South Africa. Even so, one should remind oneself that the Rip van Winkle experience need not be entirely negative, as the rediscovery of the ordinary world may infuse it with a particular enthusiasm and energy.

The availability of something as basic as money provides another kind of challenge altogether. At the very moment when the arts must confront a radically changed world, they must contend with a variety of other sectors in society where, following the scorched-earth years of apartheid, massive funding is required for a whole new education system, medical services, housing, and job creation. This forces theater to reinvent and reimagine its own possibilities and reexamine its innate resources: What at first sight

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may appear to be a prohibiting prospect may in other respects stimulate new dimensions of inventiveness.

A third concern is the disconcerting challenge of having to compete with the exaggerations and passions of real life, of unfolding history and the violence, poverty, and injustice that come with it. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, inquiring into the atrocities and human rights abuses of the apartheid era, confronts us every single day with the kind of shock so devastatingly explored by Ariel Dorfman in *Death and the Maiden.* The theatrical imagination finds it difficult to compete with this drama of reality. As I discovered so acutely in the course of writing *A Dry White Season* many years ago, there is not only an aesthetic problem involved in the need to find a metaphor or an image for atrocity but also a moral one.

A fourth challenge to theater in the new context is the need suddenly to have to compete with many other media that have undergone startling forms of development in recent years: film, television, the Internet. It must necessarily take time to evolve responses to this challenge. Responses that may range from an if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em approach (Robert Wilson's multimedia stage creations may be one example) to the other extreme of redefining, as Grotowski or Peter Brook or Jan Kott did in their different ways decades ago, the barest essence of *theater* and starting again from there.

There is a fifth challenge to theater that at first sight may seem to be peculiar to the new South Africa: the existence of 11 official languages and the need to foster cultural development in all of them, especially in those that have been marginalized in the past. How can this be reconciled with one of the primal urges of theater, namely, to be the ritualistic expression of *communal* values? How can the separate trees be nurtured without losing sight of the forest? If one reflects more deeply on the problem, of course, it reveals itself to be a problem not only for South Africa but also for the world: the need to reconcile minority cultures and regional passions with the global experiences of humanity—without simply or meekly succumbing to the master narratives and dominant discourses of what is at the moment the greatest power in the world, the United States of America. Television in Europe has already dramatically demonstrated this phenomenon. And South Africa has to deal with it, as many other countries must, not only in terms of its *own* cultural diversity but also in terms of its involvement in the *human* dilemma of living at the end of our millennium. Theater, and possibly only theater among all the arts, can, by its hybrid and various nature, its unique blend of the private and the public, attempt to *reconcile* the local and the universal, the here-and-now and the always-everywhere, the loneliness and marginality of the

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artist and the centrality and communality of the society in which we live.

There are no ready answers: In the fullest sense of the word we have to *invent* them—which imposes on theater once again the need to draw on all its resources, above all the resources of *imaging* and *imagination*. A true Theater of Search may be ready to take off once more. And this demands both hubris and deep humility: the hubris of believing in itself, the humility of acknowledging that it may fail—or, at best, that every attempt is a wholly new start and a different kind of failure.

What theater—in South Africa and elsewhere—*has* to start with is the recognition of that essential fact that the performance of a play presents us with alternatives to ourselves; and this allows us to make comparisons and, eventually, choices.

This is Brecht in a new guise, but it also goes beyond Brecht, right into the heart of our present predicament, as it underscores the ability to bring forth, to summon, to conjure up, *versions*—of the world, of the self, of history. By acting out, *playing* out, with the full complicity of our presence, the existence of the many potential versions enclosed in any given individual, or people, or country, or experience, or epoch, theater posits the possibility of *alternatives* and thus cancels fate, empowering us to recreate ourselves, to refashion our own lives, to rediscover those flickerings of imagination that, in the final analysis, make us human beings.

NOTES

[1] I have dealt with this criticism at some length in an earlier article in *Twentieth Century Literature*.

[2] Fugard proved an exception, widening the conflict between dream and reality, which for many South Africans had become a purely social, economic, and political concern, to an intensely human scale in *The Road to Mecca*, and fusing almost seamlessly the most personal memories with a larger political framework in *"Master Harold" . . . and the Boys*.

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Some Bloomsbury Interviews and Memories

WILFRED STONE

In 1957–58 and in March 1965, in the course of writing a book on E. M. Forster, I met with a number of Bloomsbury, and fringe Bloomsbury, figures. These encounters, here recorded from notes and memory, will perhaps provide a few footnotes to the Bloomsbury record.

G. E. MOORE

During an interview on Oct. 23, 1957, Forster reminded me that G. E. Moore was still alive and living in Cambridge and that I should try to see him. Forster himself, as I remember, arranged the meeting. I was invited for tea at 4:30 the following day.

The prospect of such a meeting was a little daunting. Though I had read *Principia Ethica* and some Moore criticism in Paul Arthur Schilpp's important volume, I felt quite unready to talk philosophy with the great man. I hadn't understood much of what I had read in *Principia Ethica*, and much that I half understood I didn't think I agreed with. And that whole chapter on "The Ideal"—which had moved Keynes to see "a new heaven on a new earth" and Strachey to exclaim "The age of reason has come" (Keynes 82; Forster, *Dickinson* 110)—I found somewhere between unintelligible and plain silly. But who was I to hold such views when the whole world seemed agreed that Moore was a great man, if not a saint?[1]—and when his reputation as a "philosopher's philosopher" was undisputed? I took some heart from the fact that Forster could treat Moore lightly—even make puns on his work[2]—but I hardly had his rights in the matter.

The house at 86 Chesterton Road was an old red-brick Victorian that had seen better days, one in a row paralleling the Cam at about a two-street remove. An air of postwar fatigue and shabbiness clung to the

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neighborhood, along with a stubborn respectability. Mrs. Moore, an energetic, rather bouncy woman of middle age, smiled a welcome and invited me in without ceremony. I was no sooner in the door, however, than she took me aside and whispered, conspiratorially, that *she* was to do all the talking. The doctor had forbidden Moore to talk philosophy because of his heart—he got too excited. I didn't know whether to be glad or disappointed. Mrs. Moore gave promise of being a lively and intelligent conversationalist, but she was hardly a proxy for the main exhibit.

That exhibit shone splendidly forth, like a painter's model, in the center of the next room. There sat G. E. Moore in a straight-backed chair, posed in profile like Whistler's mother, staring fixedly before him, as if mesmerized by some pure and distant thought. It was a "beautiful" face—there is no other word for it—classical features, high brow, smooth white skin, silver hair, keen blue eyes. In some pantheon of ideal callings, he might serve, sculpted and labeled, to represent *the philosopher*, a picture of otherworldly contemplation fit to sit next to Rodin's *The Thinker*. One is tempted to hyperbole because there was something comic about the whole situation, especially when Mrs. Moore, after inviting me to sit down, settled into an armchair opposite and, smiling a little mischievously, lit up a pipe.[3] Throughout the interview, she puffed away happily as our words passed to and fro over the head of G. E. Moore, silent and immobile, gazing beatifically into space. I wasn't sure he even knew I was in the room.

I remember only bits and pieces of what was said. We discussed Cambridge and Bloomsbury and my work, but Moore not at all, since Mrs. Moore declared herself unfit to talk philosophy, her husband's or any other. I remember her scolding me for not yet having read Keynes's "My Early Beliefs,"[4] which she called the best account she knew of Moore's influence on Bloomsbury (she always referred to him as "Moore," in the third person), and we gossiped a bit about Forster. I remember too the room we were sitting in, how dark and cluttered it was, and I wondered how the great "Apostle" of beauty could care so little about the aesthetics of his surroundings. The room had space and oaken comfort, but it seemed more like a warehouse filled with moveables than an area arranged after some principle of taste. I remember no color other than brown. These may be impressions rather than memories, but the one vision of beauty that remains is that of the silent, unmoving figure at the center.

Mrs. Moore had limited me to one hour, and as the time to leave approached, I was visited by a subversive thought: How could I leave this presence and never hear it speak even one word? An imp of perversity possessed me, and I suddenly blurted out: "Mr. Moore, how do you know

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when an intuition's true?" His arms flew into the air and, half out of his chair, he shouted, at the top of his treble voice, "YOU DON'T!"

I was abashed. I had done bad and it was time to leave. Mrs. Moore put down her pipe and got up, staring reproachfully in my direction. I felt guilty as Adam but was relieved to see that Moore—who said nothing further—was still alive. Considering the depths of my delinquency, Mrs. Moore let me off easy. She only said, as I remember, "Now I hope you see what I meant!" But as I went out the door, she murmured a parting shot: "You broke my rule!"

As I bicycled home that day, I wondered what, under British law, would have been the charge if those had been G. E. Moore's last words. I'm glad I didn't have to find out. (He died of natural causes a year later.)

DAVID AND ANGELICA (BELL) GARNETT

On Apr. 29, 1958, I visited the Garnetts at Hilton Hall, Huntingdon. I had just finished reading the first two volumes of Garnett's autobiography, *The Golden Echo* (1954) and *The Flowers of the Forest* (1955), and had dipped into the recently published *Aspects of Love* (1955)—and had, years before, read *Lady into Fox* (1922), *A Man in the Zoo* (1924), and *The Sailor's Return* (1925)—so I was not entirely unprepared for this visit. The autobiography had described a dedicated hedonist who made (after Blake) a religion of "satisfied desire" and prided himself on being a "libertine" rather than a "rake." He liked to think of himself (thanks, he said, to Darwin) as a "wild animal" and felt least "sin or shame" when he had given vent to his animal impulses and felt a "kinship with the lion" (*Flowers* 19).

The man I met at Fenstanton Station at 12:43 that late April day appeared to be a most tame and genial lion. Large and lumbering, white-maned, wearing baggy tweeds and a lopsided smile, he greeted me with hearty and good-natured scrutiny. He could have been the county squire looking over a possible tenant, but I felt accepted from the start. It was easy to read in his manner and features the man of the autobiography—open, earthy, and fun loving—and perhaps (to judge from his failure to provide an index to those big volumes) a little given to careless disorder. But that he had a taste for style I had no doubt when he led me to an ancient Rolls-Royce touring car in which we rode the two or so miles to Hilton Hall. He drove with a pococurantist flair, more attentive to me than to oncoming cars, but in due course we turned off, crossed a small ford, and entered the drive to Hilton Hall.

It was (and is[5]) a beautiful place: an old seventeenth-century farmhouse the color of wet straw, with great chimneys at either end and a wrought-iron gate before, all shaded, as I remember, by surrounding trees. Angelica

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Garnett met us at the door, gave me a shy and gracious welcome, and almost immediately excused herself to attend to children and to lunch. Her youth and beauty were striking—May to David's October—and I was from the first curious about their relationship.



Before this meeting, Angelica Garnett was scarcely more than a name to me. I was new to Bloomsbury—which was not an open book in those days—and I had in any case been paying more attention to Forster than to his milieu. I knew of her half brother Julian, because of his death in the Spanish Civil War and his exchanges with Forster,[6] but how he came to be a *half* brother, I don't think I could have said—though I had a dim memory of having been told. The vagaries of Bloomsbury's sexual relations had by no means been fully disclosed to me, and I was still picking up a lot of information on the run.

As one entered the house, two spacious rooms opened to right and to left, both, as I recall, with flagstone floors and beamed ceilings and great fireplaces with carved mantels. I loved that place on sight, even though I wondered—having spent two winters in postwar Britain—how they kept it warm, and how the feet kept from freezing on those flagstone floors.[7] Directly, or perhaps obliquely, ahead rose an elegant oak staircase, and

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everywhere one looked were works of art, pictures and sculptures—by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Angelica herself, a Picasso print (as I recall), and in pride of place, a stunning bust of Virginia Woolf by Stephen Tomlin. It was a place full of life, lived in and loved, an effect enhanced by the two Siamese cats running around and two lively and lovely daughters (who did not, I think, wait for introductions).

Garnett and I retired to the right-hand room for claret and talk, and there, sunk deep in armchairs before the fire, we spent some 45 minutes. The conversation wandered, for I found it hard to get right down to business; perhaps I was made dull by all this comfort. I hesitated to talk about his own fictions (what I knew of them), for they offered (to me) no easy point of critical entry. For all their descriptive grace and boyish innocence—or perhaps because of them—they seemed to skate on the thin edge of sentimentality, and I didn't want to begin the conversation on a note of insincere praise.[8] So I think we began by talking politics, discussing such things as McCarthy, Sputnik, and the Suez crisis, and made the friendly discovery that we were both liberals of roughly the same stripe. Then we got onto flying—his experience in Moths (*A Rabbit in the Air*) and mine in blimps—and from there we edged into literature. He recounted, with obvious pleasure, the familiar story of Lawrence's stormy encounter with Bloomsbury and his own friendship with Lawrence (*Flowers* 53), and talked, with equal pleasure, about Constance Garnett, his remarkable mother, who, self-taught in Russian, made those great translations of the Russian novelists. Finally, after the conversation had drifted and circled like this for some time, Garnett asked, rather testily, "Aren't you going to ask me anything about *Bloomsbury*?" It was a good question, and I'm not sure why I had thus far ducked the subject I had come to talk about—perhaps I was shy of showing my ignorance. But I was saved by the Bell: Angelica called us to lunch.

We crossed the entry to the other great room and an elegant oaken table. At this distance, that meal is only a pleasant glow and a vague memory of things delicious—more French than British, I think—though I seem to recall homemade bread and salad. David and Angelica sat opposite, quite clearly expecting me to ask about Bloomsbury—else why had they gone to all this trouble? Suddenly, in a flash of inspiration, a question framed itself, one I would have recalled, if I could, in the next moment. I asked: "Do you think that Clive Bell ever had an idea that Roger Fry hadn't had first?"[9] The words were hardly out when I remembered, or thought I remembered, that, omygod, Angelica was also a Bell—though just what kind of a Bell I wasn't sure. But it must have been a good, or at least inoffensive, question, for they both roared with

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laughter, and I felt among friends.

I took no notes during or after this meeting, so I am relying on memory. Angelica said very little, and generally deferred to David, but she was a full participant in terms of intelligent attention and pertinent asides. They both readily agreed that Fry was the greater critic, but David would have no truck with the idea that Bell was not an important critic in his own right—and took passionate exception to those who underrated Bell just because he liked to chase foxes. I don't think we discussed their aesthetics, except anecdotally, as they touched on the postimpressionist exhibitions and the "revolution" in taste that resulted. Then Forster got into the discussion, beginning I think with Forster's obituary defense of Lawrence (to the disgust of Clive Bell and T. S. Eliot)[10], and I remember bringing up Forster's distinction between "fantasy" and "prophecy" in *Aspects of the Novel*, thinking that the author of *Lady into Fox* would surely have something to say about fantasy. But I was wrong: He didn't rise to that bait at all. But when the name of Dora Carrington came up (introduced by the Garnetts, for I hadn't heard of her at that time), things took a lively turn. They both praised her as a first-rate and much-neglected artist, neglected partly because the men in her life so used her as cook and bottle washer that they forgot she was also a serious painter. As I remember, it was Angelica who made this particular emphasis, though I don't think David disagreed.[11] I think Carrington wound up our discussion that day—though I may have forgot much—and I began to think about catching the return train to Cambridge. In retrospect, that sunny afternoon returns as a vision of latter-day Bloomsbury in full operation, a lovely setting with lively intelligent people, a glimpse of a world in which privilege and simplicity, art and books, good talk and good food came together in a most satisfying combination.

I saw David Garnett many times after that, but Angelica only once, when she visited Stanford in 1982 (April 12–18) and gave a talk on "Duncan Grant at Charleston," just three years before *Deceived with Kindness* appeared.

I next crossed paths with David on the weekend of Mar. 13 or 14, 1965, at Hilton Hall. (I was in England for some three weeks gathering pictures for the Forster book.) I drove out from Cambridge with an old friend, Arthur Sale, who, with his sons, had been most helpful with the book. Angelica was not there. Arthur remembers David saying she was "out shopping" and describes David himself vividly as "blue-eyed, apple-cheeked, and blue tweed jacket to match, almost the clone of F. L. Lucas, almost the only other Bloomsberry I'd met."[12] Our conversation that day dealt only with practical matters, such as David's plans for a lecture tour

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of the United States (including Stanford) and his outrage over a building development threatening the meadow across the street—an issue that struck us as less than critical, since there was quite a bit of space before and beyond the garden gate.

The proposed tour did take place, and Garnett visited Stanford in mid-December 1966. Professor Tom Moser, another friend of David's, did most of the hosting, since my wife and I were packing for a teaching sojourn in Italy. But we did manage to open our doors to him for one evening, when he gave a talk on Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell to an appreciative audience of students and faculty.

But earlier that year (1966), David and I had a lively epistolary exchange, an exchange that, among other things, casts a light on his affiliations, emotional and intellectual, with Bloomsbury. He took sharp issue with some of the things I'd said in *The Cave and the Mountain* about Bloomsbury and other matters. (I seem to have lost his original letter, but his points are clear from the paraphrases in my reply, dated Apr. 1, 1966.) He objected strongly, for example, to my statement that "Bloomsbury produced no poets, no respectable critics of poetry, and very few practising artists" (184). In his letter he claimed Julian Bell as a poet and argued that Virginia Woolf could be considered one, since even Forster so identified her.[13] And he reminded me that Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, and Roger Fry and Angelica Bell—and some others like Jane Bussy—were all painters. This was my reply:

> If I were to rewrite that statement now, I would qualify it further, but I still think it is essentially true. Of course, in making it I had in mind *eminence*, lasting greatness or importance. Let me take up its three parts in order.
>
> Julian Bell was, to my mind, a noble and promising human being, and he wrote poetry, but can he be called a poet [in the above sense]? I honor him deeply, for many reasons, but don't you agree with me that his poems are not of the first rank, that he was essentially an amateur? And isn't it also true that, in his tragically brief life, he had not really found his vocation? How then can one think of him as a poet?
>
> You don't question the "no respectable critics of poetry" part, so I will pass it by.
>
> Now for the "and very few practising artists." I do recognize with you that Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant are important practising artists. Fry of course is far more important as a critic than as a painter, and, as I'm sure you would admit, was not a very good painter. I knew that your wife Angelica painted, but I thought it was rather an avocation with her. I thought of Quentin Bell more as an editor than as a painter. Jane Bussy I know only as a

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name connected with Lytton Strachey. But granting that all the above are painters, does it invalidate the statement: "and very few practising artists"? (By artists, of course, I mean painters, as the next sentence on p. 184 makes clear.) Considering all the names in Bloomsbury, not many fall in the practising artist category. As Virginia Woolf herself said of the original group: "Politics and philosophy were their chief interests. Art for them was the art of literature; and literature was half prophecy" [*Roger Fry* 51].

Finally, you say that I ignore, in literature, Strachey, Keynes, Fry, Bell, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, and Madame Bussy. But my statement concerns *eminence*, not all those who wrote. Perhaps I should have included Strachey along with Virginia Woolf and Forster, but I was thinking at the time of creative writers rather than essayists, biographers, or critics. Elsewhere I most certainly honor those others in their several ways. (I would never, however, have thought of Keynes as a "literary" figure. He wrote a lot of interesting articles and sketches in addition to his economic writings, but I think it would be quite misleading to refer to him as "eminent in literature," don't you?) But the burden of those beginning sentences on p. 184 establishes, I think, a most important point: that Bloomsbury was breaking with a largely puritan past and felt a strong moral drag in their creative efforts in art; there tended, therefore, to be a drift from art to theory, to explanation, to analysis. In short, my point is that there were fewer *makers* of art in Bloomsbury than one might suppose, though there were plenty of makers of other kinds.[14]

There were other points of difference. Garnett took issue, for example, with my statement about the Cambridge "Apostles," when I said that "Apostles selected Apostles." He asked how else can any group continue? I replied. "There are many other ways. You could take all comers, you could have a 'draw' system," and then went on to say that, though I intended nothing especially critical in that statement, I was opposed to a similar method of selection in the fraternity system in American universities and colleges.

Nor did Garnett like the importance I gave to Freud's statement that "a happy person never phantasies [sic], only an unsatisfied one . . ." (124).[15] He insisted that fantasy was primarily a form of "play," and I pointed out that I had acknowledged the play element on the preceding page. Garnett then asked: "Do all fairy tales and legends and stories of the gods spring from frustration?" I replied: "I wouldn't make any guess as to *all*, but surely fairy tales or stories of the gods often do represent wish fulfillments, don't they? Cinderella, for example, or Prometheus? Does not the dignity of Prometheus's suffering for the good of mankind redeem him, just as in

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as much lighter sense Cinderella is rewarded by a magic release from her pain?" [I still think that frustration and fantasy have close affinities, but I felt on uncertain ground in this talk about the gods.][16]

Garnett also took me to task for seeming to claim that art was "not of this world" (109). To this I replied:

> You ask me why art is not of this world while presumably ships and machines, etc. are. I think you slightly misunderstand me here. I am not talking about art in general but in the way Forster viewed it (when he was most idealistic). Art with him, as the hierarch of *Aspects* makes clear, is a passage from the seen to the unseen, the world of representation to the world of "value"—which with Forster in some sense transcends the actual and the material. He wants a novel which has as its final realization the music that is heard "*after* the orchestra stops playing." Of course novels cannot leave the earth and earthly like that, and Forster recognizes it (see my last paragraph, p. 121), but still he dreams of some such consummation.

David became especially heated in refuting what he took as my claim that Bloomsbury was an "ivory tower." I answered:

> But I don't call it an ivory tower. I call it something more paradoxical than that. On pp. 52–54 I specifically examine the question: In what sense can Bloomsbury be thought of as a "revolution"? My answer is that it was a revolution of "ideas," and that ideas can be weapons. Surely that is right, isn't it? That seems to me to be the very essence of the liberal ideal at the heart of the Bloomsbury ethos. The revolutionary changes effected in art by Fry and Bell and in economics by Keynes were essentially changes in *attitudes*. Keynes is by far the most *engaged* in social and political affairs, but it is well known how some other members of Bloomsbury raised eyebrows at Keynes's mixing with the "world."

Then came Garnett's blockbuster claim for Bloomsbury: "They changed the world we live in more than any of the politicians." I thought this an absurd statement and replied:

> As much as I honor Bloomsbury and its great contributions, I really don't see how you can make such a claim. More than Churchill, Roosevelt, Hitler, and Stalin? More than those who made and dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or leveled Rotterdam or Antwerp or Berlin? More than those who killed six million Jews in concentration camps? I value the Bloomsbury effort. It has done great service—along with many other forces—in keeping alive the liberal spirit. But as one who is spending large chunks of time in fighting our present engagement in the Vietnam War, I cannot feel as you do that the politicians are on the run. The

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> wielders of crude power are, it seems to me, still more persuasive with the politicians than the liberal minority; and it seems to me that British politics play follow the leader to ours with a discouraging persistence. I join with you in cheering Bloomsbury on (and in acknowledging its great achievements) but I am not ready to give them such an easy victory as you do.

There was more, but this was the bulk of it. I would answer some things differently today (for example, I would not call Bloomsbury an "ethos," and I would credit Quentin Bell with being far more than an "editor"), but I feel bound to report the words as they were written.

When I next saw David Garnett (in 1970–71), he had left Hilton and was living on a houseboat called the *Moby Dick* tied up at 106 Cheyne Walk on the Thames. I was teaching at Stanford's Cliveden Center that year and thus had ample opportunity to see him. I twice visited him in his little ark, and one visit, around Christmas, was particularly memorable. He had invited me and my 13-year-old son Greg for lunch, but we had no sooner crossed the narrow gangway and squeezed into that crowded cabin than the craft began to pitch and rock most violently. The Thames tide was rushing out to sea and doing its best to take us with it. I thought of the Severn Bore, celebrated by Tennyson,[17] but song and story had, so far as I knew, ignored this lesser counterpart. Debris rained from the shelves, but our cheerful captain kept his head and kept us entertained with stories about Bloomsbury and managed, in spite of all, to serve up a cold lunch of salad and smoked trout. One of the stories he told, much to Greg's amusement, was that of the so-called Dreadnaught Hoax, in which Virginia and Adrian Stephen and a number of their friends impersonated the Emperor of Abyssinia and were received with honors aboard the *Dreadnaught,* the pride of the British Navy, by, among others, Admiral Fisher, a Stephen cousin. When Fisher learned of the hoax through the newspapers, he was not amused.[18] As we walked away, still wobbly on our sea legs, Greg exclaimed, "What a wonderful guy!"

Shortly after that visit, on Jan. 13, 1971, David (we were now on a first-name basis, though I was never tempted to call him "Bunny," as did his Bloomsbury friends) came to Cliveden and gave a talk on Bloomsbury to my seminar. Afterward, we rode the train together back to London and took a taxi to the *Moby Dick*. Though I knew that David and Angelica had broken up, I had until then avoided the subject. But just before we parted, while still in the taxi, I said: "It must be sad parting with Angelica after all those years." His response was immediate and vehement:

> Not at all! She gave me twenty-five years of her life and I'm grateful.

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> I have no regrets and could ask for nothing more. I am happy when I think of our years together. She gave me a great gift!

Those were, I think, almost his exact words. When I returned to the taxi after seeing him to the boat, the taxi man burst out: "What a great man! I've never known anyone so generous about a woman lost before!"—or words to that effect. He had apparently eavesdropped on our conversation and was beside himself with admiration. I told him what I could.[19]

David, in prose and fiction, is proud of his sensuality and is a sincere believer in individual freedom, but after reading Angelica's book, certain reappraisals are inevitable. She called him a "bulldozer" (144), and one can only wonder what she thought when she read his published remark to T. H. White: "When you marry, choose a child-wife, as I have done."[20] David, an only child, tended to sanctify his own desires and, like the pagan gods, not see far beyond them.[21]

CLIVE BELL

I met Clive Bell at the apartment of Mrs. Barbara Bagenal, 18 Percy Street, London W.1, on May 1, 1958, at 6:30 p.m. I followed him up three flights of stairs to a dingy old flat, cluttered with books and magazines and papers, and stuffy with the odors of old parties and, it would seem, century-old air. Jovial, red-faced, and gray-haired, Bell reminded me a bit of Winston Churchill and was about the same height. It was not hard to detect the remains of the horse-riding, fox-hunting young squire that Bloomsbury (or some of it) had found hard to assimilate—or to catch a surviving hint of the "gay and amiable dog" that Keynes had seen 50 years earlier (81). But his athletic days were clearly over. He appeared in an old, blue dressing gown and bedroom slippers and led the way shuffling into the depths of that dark and musty apartment. He sat me down and poured me a glass of strong—and most delicious—Italian vermouth (after, I think, offering alternatives), and a few minutes later Mrs. Bagenal came in and dropped a lemon peel in it. She was a smiling sixtyish woman, thin-faced, perhaps a little tipsy, and promptly curled up, smiling and purring in a corner of the sofa, and got up only to refill my glass.[22]

I never referred to my prepared questions: The ambiance didn't invite a businesslike approach. What follows are constructions from the notes I wrote down immediately after the interview, as verbatim as I could make them.

WS Why, in *Old Friends,* did you say that Forster and Desmond MacCarthy were "the death of the Midnight"? [The Midnight was an undergraduate society founded by Bell and others. I knew the

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answer, but I thought this would be a good icebreaker.]

CB The reason was that they were members of the Apostles, and the Apostles met the same night. The Apostles had drawn off Strachey and Keynes as well, so the Midnight just collapsed. I was never a member.[23]

WS Who were members of the Apostles at that time?

CB You could probably get a list from F. L. Lucas or Jack Sheppard, both at King's College. But certainly Dickinson, Wedd, McTaggart, Moore, Forster, Strachey, Fry, and Keynes were members. Also Saxon-Turner and Gerald Shove.[24]

WS What kind of man was Shove?

CB [Amused] He was a Cambridge mathematician and full of fun. One time Shove called for Mrs. Bagenal, then at the Slade School of Art, in a top hat. Lady Diana Manners was continually called for by gentlemen in such regalia. Shove and Mrs. Bagenal then went down the street and into a sandwich bar. A great lark—typical of Shove. To go back. I think the Apostles are more important as influences on Forster than Bloomsbury as such.

WS What about David Garnett?

CB Garnett wouldn't know much about Forster back then. He didn't go to Cambridge.

WS Which of Forster's novels do you like best?

CB *Howards End.* [No particular reason given.]

WS Do you think you influenced Forster in any way?

CB I don't think so.

WS Who, in your opinion, is the greatest Bloomsbury artist, that is, painter?

CB There's only one—Duncan Grant. [Strange, I thought, that he didn't mention Vanessa Bell, to whom he had been married!]

WS Who's the greatest writer?

CB Virginia Woolf. But Lytton Strachey should not be underestimated.

WS Why do you think Forster left so much unresolved—unconnected—in his novels, the main issues unresolved?

CB Well, he was brought up by women—by his mother and aunts. [Perhaps he meant by this puzzling answer that Forster wasn't *masculine* enough to bring it off.]

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TWS Forster has sometimes spoken of *A Passage to India* a little scornfully. Do you think it is (1) because it was popular and (2) because people prize it for its political theme? If true, isn't it a little snobbish to dislike it for those reasons?

CB [Laughing] Yes, inverted snobbery.

I then tried to direct the interview to aesthetic matters and began by asking what he thought of Ben Shahn, whose *The Shape of Content* (1957) was just then making a small splash. This went nowhere. Bell simply begged off by saying he was no longer "up-to-date." So I turned to his own aesthetic theorizing.

TWS Do you think your emphasis on "significant form" and nonrepresentational values in art bears any comparison with Forster's emphasis on "rhythm" and his scorn of "story" in *Aspects of the Novel*?

CB Well, I don't know. No aesthetic theory is invulnerable. [Again, a strange response. He seemed either not to understand the question or not to care. I got the impression that the whole subject of aesthetics bored him and that he no longer cared to defend his own theories—or else he just wanted to forget them.]

Bell (along with the smiling Mrs. Bagenal) seemed to enjoy the visit but didn't seem anxious to prolong it. I had intended to stick to 7:30 p.m., as his letter had suggested, but at 7:15 he stood up, so I took the hint—though there had been no lag in the conversation. I was, however, more than ready to go. It had not been a very edifying exchange, since no idea seemed to catch fire, but that was probably as much my fault as his.

His final words were: "See Lucas and Sheppard. Sheppard would like you." [Why, I never found out, since I never went to see him.] My notes conclude: "an *unsubtle* man. but by no means senile—just an old squire who laughs a lot and somehow got tied up in art."

F. L. LUCAS

I took Clive Bell's advice and made an appointment to talk with F. L. Lucas (known as "Peter" to his Bloomsbury friends). We met—somewhere at King's—in the late afternoon of May 11, 1958. Clive Bell may be alone in calling Lucas "Bloomsbury" (*Old Friends* 133), but there is no question that Lucas was closely associated with the group. He was an undergraduate at King's, along with the original members, and a frequent companion of Strachey and Keynes on their weekend jaunts (Holroyd 392). Most of the interview took place as we strolled along the Backs of King's College, in the course of which we encountered the poet Thom Gunn, who had, I

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think, studied with Lucas and was working with Yvor Winters at Stanford (where I had previously known him).

What follows is a reproduction of my notes exactly as I wrote them immediately after the interview; any additions or corrections are indicated in brackets.

> I came one-half hour early. My watch [had] gone on a rampage. Lucas [is] a gray-haired man of about 60, [with] finely chiseled features, markedly piercing blue eyes—a look of intelligence and elegance about him—but the elegance is all in his face, not in his clothes. We talked about Bloomsbury. So much of what Lucas said was in quotations—English, French, and German—that I cannot remember or reproduce it. One emphasis he made was that Bloomsbury was a *jungle*—that the society of Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Duncan Grant, Clive and Vanessa Bell, and Lytton Strachey was far from being in the ordinary sense a happy family. They were intensely and rudely critical of each other. They were the sort of people who would read letters addressed to others. In real crises they could be generous, but in ordinary affairs of life they were anything but kind. He kept insisting that Dickinson and Forster were not really in Bloomsbury. They were softhearted and kind. Bloomsbury was certainly not that. Lucas stayed out of this "jungle." Also, they tormented each other with endless love affairs. Strachey was openly homosexual—a surprising thing in view of his later relationship with Carrington. Lucas went to Cambridge in 1913 [and] after one year went to war. Returned in 1919. Strachey and the rest were coming into their fame. The notoriety of *Eminent Victorians* was partly a chance of time and place—the frantic 20s were to assist him no end.

I said of Strachey that I always regarded him as a satirist. He said Strachey would not thank me for such an opinion. I said I thought his [Lucas's] *Ten Victorian Poets* had some kinship [in style] with Strachey's. He said he was not conscious of any influence.

The whole group were cut of a Voltairean cloth—anticlerical, antibourgeois. In these respects Dickinson and Forster were freakish products of the culture—at least not in the center of it.

I mentioned Forster's statement, "I'm glad I'm soft, for I've seen that hardness doesn't pay." Don't you think that's an *irresponsible* statement? No, *irrational*, said Lucas. Lucas [was reminded of] Confucius's saying [about the] man who said hardness did not pay for "I have lost all my teeth but still have my tongue." Lucas spoke and argued in quotations nearly all the time. I cannot say I *liked* him. Snobbish, aloof. Talked in quotations. Given to showing off his cleverness and learning.

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PATRICK WILKINSON

I met Patrick Wilkinson of King's College on several occasions, but on Feb. 21, 1958, we had our first and most formal meeting, and the only one on which I took notes. His academic subject was political science, and he was an old and close friend of Forster's. We began by talking about Nathaniel Wedd and G. Lowes Dickinson (two of Forster's former teachers at King's). As an introduction to Wedd, Wilkinson loaned me a copy of the *Annual Report* of the college that included an informative obituary notice on Wedd. The following are Wilkinson's remarks as I jotted them down. I am adding verbs and punctuation.

> Wedd was violently anticlerical, witty, blasphemous, unorthodox. He was ill for many years. At his death innumerable bottles of patent medicine were discovered. [He] went to Bath to an American chiropractor. She jumped on his back to rest his eyes. There was a story that after the war some Americans wanted to buy King's College Chapel and that Wedd wanted to sell it! It was said he used to spit on boys passing under his window on their way to chapel.[25] His mother had told him that, in religion, there are many points of view, so shop around and see what you like. Wedd was about eleven at the time. He liked best some crashingly unorthodox fire-and-brimstone religion. He donated money for cobblestones in King's yard. Strongly Tory. His eyes were bad for years. His wife used to read from the paper that later became the *Daily Telegraph*, so he never got an unbiased view. Wedd was one of those who wanted King's to be an Athens and not an Alexandria [i.e., given to teaching rather than research]. He was the man who first encouraged Forster to write.
>
> Then we got on to Forster and G. L. Dickinson. Dickinson was not a pacifist but a believer in collective security. Forster lived with the Wilkinsons in 1945–52. He had a room in college [actually rooms] but kept two rooms with the Wilkinsons. Did you agree with his [Dickinson's] position always, or generally? We disagreed on the Korean War. Forster said that Dickinson would hate to see this [war], he loved the Chinese [sic] so much. Since Dickinson essentially believed in collective security, he surely would—however reluctantly—have been with the U.N. in this instance. Wilkinson remarked that Dickinson was considerably more of a practical politician than Forster. Forster judged by his emotions.
>
> Forster was opposed to *authority*. [He was] always for the underdog. After India was freed—though he still had innumerable friends there—he became very critical of Nehru and Indian policy. Forster was put on King's *Garden Committee*, but all he would do was look at the flowers. Never attended meetings. When Wilkinson became involved as a College officer in administrative business of

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the Council, Forster was bored and contemptuous (too strong)—always referring to the Council as "them" even though Wilkinson was on it.

Forster made many friends in the working classes. A great friend is a London policeman—now probation officer in Coventry. He paints, is artistic, etc.[26] Forster eats with undergraduates nearly always and seeks out those who come from the working classes. The policeman has a son—a plumber. He was the one who suggested the title *Two Cheers for Democracy*. Forster during World War II was virtually a pacifist.

Wilkinson remarked that American critics try to be scientific, the English merely to state their personal views. [Lionel] Trilling is "American" in this sense. Is Forster embarrassed by his continuing popularity? A little, said Wilkinson. [He] feels perhaps a little that anything popular cannot be good. Wilkinson recommended that I read an article on Forster by David Cecil in *Harper's*.

NOEL ANNAN

I met often with Noel Annan in 1957–58 when he was Provost of King's College—and later—and we often exchanged letters. I have notes on a particular meeting that occurred on Nov. 27, 1957, in which Annan (not yet Lord Annan) made some interesting remarks about Bloomsbury. I think the following is pretty close to verbatim.

Bloomsbury had two fixed items of faith: (1) pleasure is a good (a belief that caused an infuriated and final division with [F. R.] Leavis and his "seriousness") and (2) a belief in humor (a corrective to taking oneself too seriously).

They believed in a relativistic world. Courage is good, but so is sensitivity; seriousness is good, but so is frivolity; rationality is good, but so is imagination. They cherished an awareness of a multiform world—and a willingness to wonder at it and leave it alone.

LEONARD WOOLF

On Mar. 17, 1965, at 2:30 p.m., I had a very brief interview with Leonard Woolf at his office in the Hogarth Press, 40 William IV Street, London. He could spare me very little time, since he came up from the country only occasionally and had to attend to press business on those days, and I took no notes. But I remember two things: the setting and one remark he made. I won't soon forget climbing those long flights of narrow stairs up to Woolf's tiny office on the top, I think fourth, floor of that rickety firetrap of a building. It was something out of Dickens. Woolf was seated at his desk, his head almost touching the low ceiling, and looked at me rather

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sternly. All I remember of our conversation is a brief exchange about *A Passage to India*. He said. "Well, you know that that cave business is all the *bunk*, don't you?"[27]

I answered, "Well, if it's all the bunk, then I've just written a very silly book."

NOTES

[1] Leonard Woolf called him "a man of almost saintly innocence" and the only "great" man he had ever known in the course of ordinary life (15, 13); and Harrod thought his admirers were not mistaken in venerating him as a "saint" (76).

[2] Versions of the epigraph of *Principia*—"Everything is what it is, and not another thing"—and of Moore's oft-repeated phrase "on the whole" often appear as sly private jokes in Forster's work. See Stone 63.

[3] She was born Dorothy Mildred Ely and had met Moore at his 1915–16 lectures. They were married in 1916. Typical of Cambridge professors' wives of that time, she seems to have lived in her husband's shadow. She is barely mentioned in Moore's own "An Autobiography" (Schilpp 34) and in Regan's book on Moore and Bloomsbury (13).

[4] I had actually looked into the book, but I didn't feel I was ready to be examined on it.

[5] It is now occupied by David Garnett's son Richard and his wife Jane, who have made many modernizing improvements on the house.

[6] See "War and Peace: A Letter to E. M. Forster" and Forster's "Notes for a Reply" in Julian Bell, *Essays, Poems, and Letters*, 335–92.

[7] Angelica Garnett attests that these wanderings were justified. She writes: "We had little money and no luxuries, the house was unbelievably cold and draughty, our methods of heating antiquated, our supplies of hot water inadequate" (*Deceived* 161). David Garnett occupied the house from 1924, shortly after his first marriage to Ray Marshall, until about 1970, when he went to live at the Chateau de Charry, Montcuq, in southwestern France.

[8] Forster said of Garnett that he was "not a pure fantasist," that he is "deliberately naive and has found in fantasy a serviceable ally rather than a fairy queen" ("Butterflies" 6–7). Compare this tactful remark to that of Strachey on Garnett's *She Must:* "there seems to be no interior tide flowing through it, to carry one along" (Holroyd 531). Both comments seem to me just, and touch, in their different ways, on Garnett's imaginative failure to let a work grow from the inside out, sparked by its own idea and energy.

[9] I had been reading Roger Fry and Clive Bell for a chapter (later scrapped) for the Forster book and had been struck by the vitality and originality of Fry's mind and the relatively pedestrian and imitative quality of Bell's. With Fry, the notion of "significant form" (approached under other rubrics) was a living idea; with Bell it seemed mechanical, a mere buzz word.

[10] Forster called him "the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation." See Stone 382.

[11] After reading *Deceived with Kindness*, I could only wonder how far Angelica

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made common cause with Carrington. In that book she tells of the joys, but also the fatigues, of running a household of four daughters, many guests, and the unequal and burdensome relationship with a husband many years her senior. "It is true I had help," she writes, "but as I refused to give up music and painting, I was in a constant state of fatigue, and went to bed each night almost giddy with exhaustion" (161). In 1970, David Garnett edited Carrington's letters and diaries.

[12] Arthur Sale. Letter to the author. 12 Mar. 1997.

[13] In *Two Cheers for Democracy,* Forster characterizes her as "a poet, who wants to write something as near to a novel as possible" (259).

[14] In a response dated Apr. 18, 1966, Garnett wrote: "Of course we are much more in agreement than might appear from my letter." But in another letter (now lost) he argued again for Keynes as a "literary" figure, referring to his *Essays in Persuasion* and *Essays in Biography*. I did not disagree, but only argued again the question of literary *eminence*.

[15] From "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," trans. I. F. Duff, *Complete Works* (ed. Strachey) in O. B. Hardison, Jr., *Modern Continental Literary Criticism* (New York: 1962) 243.

[16] Garnett had a warm affinity for Greece and the Greek gods. In a letter dated June 24, 1965, he writes of a "marvellous" trip ending in Greece, saying:

> Greece is the most beautiful country I have ever seen. . . . There was a considerable earthquake which made one realise that the old earthshaker Zeus was still around. I felt that the gods were very close and was happy with them. Whereas in Mexico they aren't at all what I feel an affinity for.

[17] *In Memoriam,* Canto 19.

[18] See Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf,* 157–61.

[19] Angelica's version is slightly different: "When I eventually left him, although he was deeply hurt and never really recovered, he could not wish me ill: whatever he failed to understand he courageously tried to put up with" (*Deceived* 157).

[20] David Garnett. Letter dated January 1944, *White/Garnett Letters* 143. He goes on:

> You get so much pleasure from watching her taste the well-known things for the first time & thus live again. The idea that old chaps of seventy are rejuvenated by the society of girls of 17 is perfectly true & is proved by my experience.

What about *her* experience? I don't think David ever fully realized how ego-centered his joie de vivre was.

[21] Angelica writes: "But he was never interested in the truth behind his feelings, only in their strength, which was for him their justification" (*Deceived* 157).

[22] Her name appears repeatedly in the Bloomsbury record, but seldom her picture. She is no doubt the woman referred to by Noel Annan in a recent article as "one of the silliest and most boring of the pre-war hangers-on of Bloomsbury" (Annan 59).

[23] This exclusion was a disappointment to Bell and an indication of his outsider status in Bloomsbury. He toughed it out, but one should not miss the note of sadness in this confession.

[24] G. Lowes Dickinson, J. M. E. McTaggart, G. E. Moore, E. M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes.

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[14] Though it is not in my notes, I'm quite sure that it was Wilkinson who told me of Wedd's remark at table: "This lamb is almost as hard to swallow as the Lamb of God!"

[15] This was R. J. ("Bob") Buckingham.

[16] *Reason* and *reasonableness* were key terms in Woolf's thinking and he, like Roger Fry, disliked what they called—mistakenly—Forster's "mysticism."

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Mr. Charrington's Junk Shop: T. S. Eliot and Modernist Poetics in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Patricia Rae

The most intriguing minor character in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also the most underexamined: the proprietor of Winston Smith's favorite junk shop, Mr. Charrington. Critical interest in Winston's acquaintances has centered on O'Brien, the charismatic intellectual who engineers the sting operation leading to Winston's arrest. Yet Charrington plays an equally important role in that entrapment, empathizing with the protagonist's desires only to preside over his deportation to the Ministry of Love. If Keith Alldritt and Michael Shelden are right in suggesting that Smith's story is "very much a resume of Orwell's own history" (Alldritt 176; see also Shelden 471), we might reasonably ask whom among Orwell's associates Mr. Charrington is meant to represent. This paper will argue that the shopkeeper is the poet who engaged Orwell in an analogous experience of attraction and betrayal in real life: T. S. Eliot. Winston's fatal association with Charrington is an allegory of Orwell's attraction to, and disillusionment with, Eliot's modernist poetics.[1]

Orwell's view of Eliot was much more favorable than a passing familiarity with the writers' politics would lead one to expect. As a struggling translator and novelist in the early 1930s, Orwell applied unsuccessfully to the Faber editor for help with his publications: to seek, first, a commission for a translation of Jacques Roberti's *A la Belle de Nuit*, and then a reading for the manuscript of *Down and Out in Paris and London*.[2] Some desire for Eliot's approval never left him, even as his own stature in the literary world grew. As an editor himself, he both solicited Eliot's work and cultivated a personal relationship with the poet.[3] In 1944 he

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attempted again to publish with Faber, this time to have Eliot reject *Animal Farm*.

The most fascinating dimension of Orwell's loyalty to Eliot was his staunch defense of the poet against frequent attacks by the leftist literary intelligentsia in the late 1930s and early 1940s. As Alex Zwerdling has argued (*Orwell and the Left* 185), Orwell's considerable sympathy with Marxist aesthetics did not extend to its practice of equating political judgments and aesthetic ones. So although Orwell could join with other leftist critics in objecting to Eliot's elitist attitudes and conservative politics (e.g., *CEJL* I, 121, 151; II, 199), he could not tolerate their frequent condemnation of Eliot's writings on these grounds—what he called the critics' "half-conscious confusion" of ideology and literary value:

> If you ask a "good party man" (and that goes for almost any party of the Left) what he objects to in Eliot, you get an answer that ultimately reduces to this. Eliot is a reactionary (he has declared himself a royalist, an Anglo-Catholic, etc.) and he is also a "bourgeois intellectual" out of touch with the common man: therefore he is a bad writer. . . . *[But t]o dislike a writer's politics is one thing. To dislike him because he forces you to think is another, not necessarily incompatible with the first.* (*CEJL* II, 292; my italics)

For Orwell, Eliot's politics did not change the fact that he, with fellow modernists Joyce, Pound, and Lawrence, was "aesthetically alive" in a way unprecedented since the "Romantic Revival" (*CEJL* II, 201). Modernist experimentation, in his view, had "broken the cultural circle in which England had existed for something like a century" and had "not yet run its course" (*CEJL* II, 206-07).

Orwell also argued against leftist judgments of the ideology of Eliot's style. First, he disputed the view that his style was inherently difficult and therefore elitist. To Harold Laski's charge that Eliot wrote only for the few, he countered that part of the poet's inventiveness was an effort to speak in the language of common man: "Eliot, as it happens, is one of the few writers of our times who have tried seriously to write English as it is spoken" (*CEJL* III, 137).[4] More significantly, in the seminal essay "Inside the Whale" (1940), he defended Eliot against Louis Macneice's charge (in *Modern Poetry*) that Eliot's dedication to formal experimentation at the expense of social or political commentary made his work inferior to that of Auden and Spender. In Orwell's view, an intensely personal and ahistorical poem like "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" had been a better offering for a 1915 audience than a poem commenting on the horror of war, because it provided a much-needed source of *escape:*

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> What [Macneice] wishes us to believe is that Eliot's 'successors' (meaning Mr. Macneice and his friends) have in some way 'protested' more effectively than Eliot did by publishing 'Prufrock' at the moment when the Allied armies were assaulting the Hindenburg Line. Just where these 'protests' are to be found I do not know. But in the contrast between Mr. Forster's comment and Mr. Macneice's lies all the difference between a man who knows what the 1914–18 war was like and a man who barely remembers it. The truth is that in 1917 there was nothing that a thinking and sensitive person could do, except to remain human, if possible. And a gesture of helplessness, even of frivolity, might be the best way of doing that. If I had been a soldier fighting in the Great War, I would sooner have got hold of 'Prufrock' than *The First Hundred Thousand* or Horatio Bottomley's *Letters to the Boys in the Trenches*. I should have felt, like Mr. Forster, that by simply standing aloof and keeping touch with pre-war emotions, Eliot was carrying on the human heritage. What a relief it would have been at such a time to read about the hesitations of a middle-aged highbrow with a bald spot! So different from bayonet drill! After the bombs and the food queues and the recruiting posters, a human voice! What a relief! (*CEJL* I, 525)

Orwell wrote frequently about the pleasure he had derived from Eliot's early poetry. He included Eliot among the writers he "care[d] most about and never gr[e]w tired of . . ." (*CEJL* II, 24), and in a 1942 review of the first three of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, he professed to have many lines from the earlier (and to his mind, better) poems committed to memory (*CEJL* II, 237).

Orwell's attraction to Eliot appears to have been based on much more, though, than a taste for pure aesthetic pleasure or even a desire to disturb the "highbrow baiting" (*CEJL* III, 160) of his leftist contemporaries. As Graham Good and Brian Matthews have shown, the two writers concurred in several cultural and historical views. One was their appreciation for folk culture, and a sense that it was atrophying in the face of popular cultural forms like the cinema and gramophone music.[5] Another, directly related to Orwell's willingness to defend Eliot against the left, was their mutual suspicion of self-appointed cultural elites. In a 1948 review of Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, Orwell endorses and even embellishes Eliot's arguments against such elites, arguing that the poet errs only in not making his case more strongly (*CEJL* IV, 455–56). But by far the strongest point of sympathy between the two writers was in their profound sense of disaffection from contemporary life and of longing for the past. A number of Orwell's lyrics of the 1930s (and two of the

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protagonists of his early novels[6]) express disillusionment and nostalgia reminiscent of *The Waste Land* and borrow from its imagery in the process. The following lines, from the 1934 lyric "On a Ruined Farm near His Master's Voice Gramophone Factory," are typical:

> As I stand at the gate
> With warring worlds on either hand—
> To left the black and budless trees,
> The empty sties, the barns that stand
>
> Like tumbling skeletons—and to right
> The factory-towers, white and clear
> Like distant, glittering cities seen
> From a ship's rail—as I stand here,
>
> I feel, and with a sharper pang,
> My mortal sickness; how I give
> My heart to weak and stuffless ghosts,
> And with the living cannot live.
> . . . . . .
> Yet when the trees were young, men still
> Could choose their path—the winged soul,
> Not cursed with double doubts, could fly
> Arrow-like to a foreseen goal. . . . (*CEJL* I, 134–35)

While the contemporary world evoked here resembles Eliot's wasteland in its lifeless trees and decayed buildings, its past recalls Eliot's in the sense of purpose shared by its inhabitants, enabling them to aspire to lofty goals. The contrast is like that Eliot establishes when he sets *The Waste Land*'s listless inhabitants (Lil, the typist, the Thames-daughters) against the impassioned heroes of ancient tragedies (Ophelia, Philomel, Cleopatra). Collectively, the longings expressed in the lyric explain Orwell's most powerful defense of the contribution made by Eliot and his fellow modernists in 1942: the claim that, however offensive these writers' politics, their work is to be cherished for bringing back both a "sense of history" and a reminder of "the possibility of tragedy" (*CEJL* II, 206).

In preserving the "sense of history," in particular, Eliot's work seemed to Orwell a valuable alternative to the denial of history endorsed by the leftist intelligentsia: both indirectly by their support for Stalin, whose regime sustained itself by radical rewritings of the past,[7] and directly by their frequent call throughout the 30s to abandon nostalgia for dreams of a utopian future. A feeling for the past, and particularly for national tradition, seemed to Orwell to be especially important in wartime, as a source of solidarity and strength (see Sherry 93).

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Scholars of the Orwell/Eliot relationship generally find that Orwell's approval of the poet grew steadily after his disenchantment with Soviet communism during the Spanish Civil War.[8] His respect for Eliot is said to have deepened despite two events that might have disrupted it: the publication of the first three of the profoundly Christian *Four Quartets* in 1942 and Eliot's rejection of *Animal Farm* in 1944. For Alldritt, Sherry, and Zwerdling, this respect is reflected in Orwell's growing enthusiasm for modernist poetics, an enthusiasm ultimately, in their view, informing the style of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.[9] But Mr. Charrington suggests that a very different picture emerges of how Orwell viewed Eliot—and modernist poetics—at the end of his life. The shopkeeper's brutal betrayal of Smith suggests that, by the time he wrote his last novel, Orwell deeply regretted his enchantment both with the poet and his poetry.

Charrington is to Winston Smith as Eliot is to Orwell: a prospective solution to a deficit of history. Smith is initially drawn to Charrington because of one especially intolerable policy in totalitarian Oceania: that of rewriting, or at worst annihilating, the past. In his post in the records department of the Ministry of Truth, Smith's chief responsibility is to destroy or alter archival material at odds with party dogma: No document is to retain any mention of any political alignment other than the present one, any pronouncement or prediction of Big Brother's at odds with current truth, or any references to political prisoners who have been "vaporized" (32). Above all, no evidence must survive to suggest that a higher standard of living was enjoyed in the past than is enjoyed now: The party ensures political stability by making historical comparisons impossible.[10] Smith deposits offending documents in slots in the office wall known as "memory holes," whence they are "whirled away on a current of warm air to . . . enormous furnaces . . . hidden somewhere in the recesses of the building" (29).

The problem with Smith, however, is that he hasn't yet mastered the mental discipline known as "double-think": He can't entirely forget what he has altered, or that he has altered it.[11] He is haunted by the memory of a photograph he once destroyed: a picture of three rebels—Jones, Aaronson, and Rutherford—whose details definitively disproved the party's official account of their lives. Like the protagonist of *The Waste Land*, Winston faces the wasteland of Oceania burning with "memory and desire," both nostalgic for, and intensely curious about, the past:

> He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these vistas of rotting nineteenth century houses, their sides

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> shored up with balks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions? And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the will-herb straggled over the heaps of rubble; and the places where the bombs had cleared a larger patch and there had sprung up sordid colonies of wooden dwellings like chicken houses? (2–3)

Life is intolerable to Smith, in short, for precisely the reason the party aimed to disallow: his dim memory that "things had once been different" (46). It is his interest in recovering the possibility of historical comparison that attracts him to the proletarian quarter of London, and to Charrington's junk shop. Piled high with personal and household objects from prerevolutionary days—knives and chisels, watches and clocks, snuffboxes and broaches—the shop offers him the very kind of concrete historical evidence he has been looking for. As "solid objects with no words attached to them" (119), its artifacts represent a material world immune to the party's revisions. As personal and household effects, they testify to a world of private love and cozy domesticity, a world long vanished from Oceania by edict of Big Brother. The shop, in short, offers Smith the same thing Eliot's early poetry offered Orwell: a decidedly nostalgic "sense of history."[12]

If Charrington resembles Eliot in being a purveyor of history, several more superficial details establish the parallel. Charrington has "a vague air of intellectuality," as though he is "some kind of literary man" (72).[13] Like Eliot (and other modernist poets), he eschews rhetoric, aiming only to *present* his wares, not to sell them:

> Wandering about among his worthless stock, with his long nose and thick spectacles and his bowed shoulders in the velvet jacket, he had always vaguely the air of being a collector rather than a tradesman. With a sort of faded enthusiasm he would finger this scrap of rubbish or that—a china bottle-stopper, the painted lid of a broken snuff-box, a pinchbeck locket containing a strand of some long-dead baby's hair—*never asking that Winston should buy it, merely that he should admire it.* (116; my italics)[14]

Charrington also recalls Eliot in his habit of "seeming almost to fade out of existence" as he speaks (106). As Winston will eventually discover, he hides behind a persona, uttering opinions not his own; in Eliot's terms, he "extinguishes" his "personality," dissociating the "man who suffers" from the one who "creates" (*SE* 17). A further clue to the identity between Charrington and Eliot is the parallel Orwell establishes between him and someone else Winston meets in the prole quarter: an old man who shares

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with Winston some disconnected reminiscences of life before the revolution. Orwell clearly means for us to see the parallel between this Gerontian figure's[15] "rubbish-heap"(71) of memories and the contents of the junk shop (which also resemble the "chaotic, irregular, and fragmentary" array of memories Eliot envisaged within the poet's mind [*SE* 287]); indeed, he may mean us to hear "Gerontian" in "Charrington" (or late in the novel, "Burnt Norton"). That the old prole's memory shards (and by extension, Charrington's broken artifacts) are Eliot's is suggested by their inclusion of "the swirls of dust on a windy morning seventy years ago" (72), a phrase recalling Eliot's "Preludes" or "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." A time "seventy years ago" in 1984 was almost exactly the year these poems were first published, in Wyndham Lewis's *Blast*.[16] The fragmentary state of the junk shop's contents, finally, and the nostalgia they evoke, suggests a possible parallel between the shop and the text of *The Waste Land*, another "heap of broken images" inspiring its reader to view the present in the light of a nobler past. In this light, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* becomes an allegory of reading, with Charrington as author, and Winston in a double role as *The Waste Land*'s protagonist and its reader. As protagonist, Winston seeks inspiration and renewal in history; as reader, he demonstrates the hermeneutic challenges posed by the junk's distinctively modernist form.

In addition to offering Winston some "solid objects" to fuel his nostalgia (a move analogous to the use of concrete discourse by modern poets, on which more shortly), Charrington presents him with some textual artifacts, in the form of "fragments from forgotten nursery rhymes" (116). Winston's favorite among these is one beginning "Oranges and lemons, say the bells of St. Clement's!" (76) and proceeding to list all of London's lost churches. When he repeats the rhyme's first line to himself, he is enthralled by "the illusion of bells, the bells of a lost London that still existed somewhere or other, disguised and forgotten" (77). Charrington's expertise in nursery rhymes and Winston's enthusiastic response may be Orwell's way of documenting his and Eliot's mutual appreciation for folk culture—his way of acknowledging, perhaps, Eliot's incorporation of nursery rhyme fragments into *The Waste Land*. The key point he is making here, though, concerns the way the kind of textual fragment deployed in modernist poetry tantalizes its reader, playing on his or her desire for completion. The shopkeeper, Orwell tells us, "could never recall more than a few lines of any one rhyme" (116), and it is in part a desire to "drag the rest of [the] poem out of [his] memory" (77) that motivates Winston to make further visits to the shop (120). Readers of *The Waste Land* will recognize the way its fragments inspire return visits—both to the text

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itself and to Eliot's notes—appealing to a compulsion to know the wholes from which the fragments have been broken.

Charrington's offerings also resemble Eliot's in reminding Winston—as Eliot's poetry reminded Orwell—of the "possibility of tragedy." In Winston's conception, tragedy is something belonging to the remote past, when love and loyalty leant nobility to suffering. He recalls the dignity, for example, of his own mother's death, in one of the party's "first great purges":

> The thing that now suddenly struck Winston was that his mother's death, nearly thirty years ago, had been tragic and sorrowful in a way that was no longer possible. Tragedy, he perceived, belonged to the ancient time, to a time when there was still privacy, love, and friendship, and when the members of a family stood by one another without needing to know the reason. His mother's memory tore at his heart when because she had died loving him, when he was too young and selfish to love her in return, and because somehow, he did not remember how, she had sacrificed herself to a conception of loyalty that was private and unalterable. Such things, he saw, could not happen today. Today there were fear, hatred, and pain, but no dignity of emotion, no deep or complex sorrows. (23)

Tragedy, in Winston's sense, has vanished from Oceania along with the conditions that make it possible. The citizens of Oceania know neither privacy nor loyalty nor passion. By contrast with Winston's mother, and like the inhabitants of Eliot's wasteland,[17] they have been convinced that "mere impulses, mere feelings, [are] of no account," that what one feels or does not feel "makes literally no difference" (127). Winston's findings at the junk shop, however, stir up "ancestral memories" (75) of a world where privacy was possible and deep personal affections prevailed. The most evocative of these, and Winston's prize possession, is a beautiful glass paperweight with a piece of coral at its center. This object, in Winston's eyes, resembles "a tiny world with its atmosphere complete" (113), its coral, his and Julia's lives, entwined and protected within. The paperweight also triggers memories of two scenes in which private affections inspired "noble" actions: one an image of his mother embracing his dying sister, the other a newsreel picture of a Jewish woman impulsively raising her arm to protect her son from enemy bullets (134). Along with Charrington's offer of a real haven—a room above the shop where the lovers can meet—the paperweight inspires Winston to defy the party and heed his passions, and so to reintroduce a form of "nobility" into his own life.

In its capacity as a "solid object," with the power of nondiscursive

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communication, and in the purely aesthetic appeal it holds for Winston—he is especially fond of it "because of its apparent uselessness" (74)—the paperweight recalls the concrete images of modernism's "pure poetry": the imagists' image, or Eliot's "objective correlative." It may also be intended to recall another of Eliot's favorite poetic devices: the metaphysical conceit. Round and flawless, it is to the other broken and tarnished objects in Charrington's shop what Eliot said the conceit was to the contents of its creator's mind: a "new whole" or "new compound" condensed from the poet's "chaotic, irregular, and fragmentary" array of memories and percepts (*SE* 287; 19). Hence the complex meaning a reader like Winston finds in it:

> He turned over towards the light and lay gazing into the glass paperweight. The inexhaustibly interesting thing was not the fragment of coral but the interior of the glass itself. There was such a depth of it, and yet it was almost as transparent as air. It was as though the surface of the glass had been the arch of the sky, enclosing a tiny world with its atmosphere complete. He had the feeling that he could get inside of it, and that in fact he was inside it, along with the mahogany bed and the gateleg table, and the clock and the steel engraving and the paperweight itself. The paperweight was the room he was in, and the coral was Julia's life and his own, fixed in a sort of eternity at the heart of the crystal. (113)

Winston's interpretation of the paperweight's "rainwatery" (112) glass recalls the meaning Donne derives from the "round ball" of a tear: Both become emblems of private havens, into which the world of time is inverted and preserved.[18] The speakers of "The Sun Rising" and "A Valediction," among many others, share Winston's feeling "that it [might] be possible to get inside that glassy world, and that once inside it time could be arrested" (117). Orwell's decision to place a piece of coral at the center of the "watery" glass, finally, suggests a connection with one of Eliot's own extended conceits, whose burden, again, is the longing for privacy. The coral is reminiscent of the crab and "oyster-shells" of Prufrock's internal sea, the private world of the paperweight, then, of the space where Eliot's shy protagonist might share intimacies unobserved by strangers.[19]

In several ways, then, the shopkeeper recalls Eliot, and the shop recalls the essential elements of his modernist poetics. The most important thing about Charrington's offerings, however, is that they are a trap. For just as Winston's investigations get underway, his private haven is invaded and the paperweight smashed to pieces. Mr. Charrington presides brutally over the arrest, his kindly persona vanishing to reveal the "alert, cold

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face" of a Thought Policeman (173). This startling turn of events casts Winston's whole venture into historical research into a new light, and with it Charrington's role as archivist. It also provides new support for linking Charrington with Eliot. First, we learn that the shopkeeper has been spying on Winston and Julia's sterile liaison through a picture of a church on the wall, an activity recalling that of the "most important" persona in *The Waste Land*, Tiresias (*CP*, note to line 218).[20] Like Tiresias, Charrington is a voyeur, reading the "half-formed thoughts" of the lovers and "foretelling the rest" (*CP*, lines 251–52, 229). Second, in turning Winston over to be brainwashed at the Ministry of Love, Charrington effectively endorses a line of thinking consistent with the themes of *Four Quartets*. The most important lesson Winston is forced to relearn at the Ministry is that every aspect of his fate has been foreordained, part of a plot conceived in the mind of Big Brother. And the terms Orwell has had him use to articulate that philosophy are Eliot's: "What was happening" to him, he realizes, "was only the working-out of a process that had started years ago. . . . He had accepted it. *The end was contained in the beginning*" (123; my italics).[21]

Winston's relationship with Charrington begins with empathetic ardor and ends with the discovery that the shopkeeper is no soul mate after all. If Orwell did, indeed, have his own relationship with Eliot in mind in recounting this betrayal, what could have prompted such an indictment? The answer lies partly in those two actions of Eliot's I have already mentioned, both of which must have been profoundly disappointing to Orwell: his conversion to the Anglo-Catholic Church and his rejection of *Animal Farm*. But more generally, the story of Charrington's betrayal reflects Orwell's wariness of his consensus with Eliot, his consciousness that strange bedfellows will eventually, and inevitably, fall out.

The proposition that Charrington's change of face signifies Eliot's religious conversion makes sense of several details in the account of Winston's arrest and its aftermath. It explains Orwell's decision, for example, to have Winston use Eliot's words in articulating the doctrine of predestination. It also accounts for Charrington's order to his henchmen to "pick up [the] pieces" (173) of Winston's smashed paperweight: The pluralistic poet of *The Waste Land*, who revels in chaos, gives way to the theistic poet of *Four Quartets*, who cannot stand disorder. Finally, it helps explain Charrington's shift from helpful archivist to agent of a party that actively represses empirical investigation. Orwell wrote frequently about the similarities between the Catholic Church and the Communist Party, most notably in his 1942 review lamenting Eliot's new direction in *Four*

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Quartets, and among other parallels he notes that both are opposed to questioning their policies through scientific or historical research. Eliot's poem, he complains, teaches that such research "is all nonsense . . . that the only people ever likely to reach an understanding of the universe are saints, the rest of us being reduced to 'hints and guesses'" (*CEJL* II, 238). Though Orwell's allusion here is to "Dry Salvages," he might have supported his claim further with a passage from "Little Gidding," whose words would have seemed appropriate for one of O'Brien's lessons at the Ministry of Love:

> You are not here to verify,
> Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
> Or carry report. You are here to kneel
> Where prayer has been valid. (*CP* 215)[22]

If Charrington begins as the Eliot of *The Waste Land*, who designed his poetry on the model of the "reassuring science of archaeology" (*SE* 13), he ends as the poet of *Four Quartets*, who preached incuriosity. Indeed, Winston's reprogramming at the Ministry of Love reflects all the other principal attributes of Eliot's new way of thinking, as Orwell saw them: a "resignation" to fate, an acceptance of "intellectual absurdities," and a spatial sense of time (*CEJL* II, 238, 241).

Charrington's betrayal might equally well have been prompted by Eliot's rejection of *Animal Farm*. Rejecting a work of Orwell's was nothing new for the Faber editor, but this was the first time he cited political grounds for doing so: He explained to Orwell that, in Faber's opinion, the book's scathing critique of Stalin's government was not "the right point of view from which to criticize the political situation at the present time."[23] The possibility of offending Britain's wartime ally is the only reason Eliot offers for his decision; he had otherwise the highest praise for Orwell's narrative skill. Two things about this response must have given Orwell pause. Most obviously, Eliot's deference to Soviet Russia, however typical of his compatriots, must have seemed an ironic change of allegiance for such a notoriously conservative poet. Suddenly, a thinker Orwell had been able to count on to share his disgust with communism assumed the role of its defender. Second, Eliot's citation of the novel's politics as grounds for rejecting it must have recalled to Orwell the very kind of "confusion of ideology and literary value" he had previously found in critics on the left. Once, an objection to ideological criticism had motivated Orwell to defend Eliot against the leftist intelligentsia; now Eliot is the one making ideological judgments, effectively aligning himself with his former enemies. In a July 1949 letter to Sir Richard Rees, Orwell

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criticizes Eliot for precisely the same thing he had once shielded him against, citing him as a key example of a critic whose judgments betray political biases (*CEJL* IV, 504–05). It has generally been assumed that Orwell bore Eliot no ill will as a result of the rejection.[24] But the *nature* of the rejection *had* to have rankled, offending Orwell's lifelong objection to censorship, if not his pride. It is very possible that he registered that offense in his portrait of Charrington, loyalist of a party committed to the violent repression of free speech, among other things.

Correlating Charrington's betrayal solely with these two disappointing actions of Eliot's will not account, however, for one crucial aspect of Orwell's plot: the fact that the shopkeeper conspires against Winston *from the very beginning*. Orwell is not documenting a striking *conversion* on Charrington's part so much as he is a sudden *revelation* on Winston's, in which the protagonist discovers the shopkeeper's true colors. Though Eliot's conversion and rejection might have prompted Orwell to cast him as a villain, Orwell's larger concern appears to be to reexamine the vagaries of his own political alignment, which he occasionally found to be *with* the conservative Eliot, and *against* his own fellow writers on the left: Intense political climates produce strange bedfellows. Winston's experience with Charrington, in other words, may be best described as a case of false empathy, in which the appearance of shared values masks fundamental disagreement. On close examination, the two central issues on which Orwell and Eliot agreed, the danger of self-elected elites and the supremacy of the past, *serve profoundly different agendas*, and both their consensus and divergence are reflected in the story of Winston's entrapment: the first, in what attracts him to the shopkeeper, the second, in the awful revelation of what Charrington really believes.

Consider first the writers' consensus on elective elites. Orwell's 1948 review, in which he registers his agreement with Eliot on this matter, also dramatizes how very superficial that consensus was. It begins with Orwell's enthusiastically embellishing the argument of Eliot's *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. Eliot might have strengthened his case, Orwell observes, by noting that a self-appointed elite "may ossify very rapidly," because "its rulers are able to choose their successors, and will always tend to choose people resembling themselves" (*CEJL* IV, 456). On making this point, however, Orwell stops to look more closely at Eliot's underlying agenda and sees that it is fundamentally at odds with his own. Eliot's goal in attacking elective aristocracies, he observes, is ultimately to preserve inherited ones and all the injustices that go with them; he objects to one kind of elite only to support another. Orwell's own opposition to elites is motivated by an objection to hierarchy and class division in all incarnations,

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and the notion of an inherited aristocracy is something that, "like slavery," has "ceased to be defensible" (*CEJL* IV, 456). What begins as a meeting of minds, then, rapidly degenerates into a serious dispute. The review was published in the same month in which Orwell completed *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Orwell clearly has its record of consensus and dissension in mind when he sketches Winston's entrapment. For Orwell's embellished version of Eliot's argument forms part of the text of Emmanuel Goldstein's *The Theory of Oligarchical Collectivism*, the subversive book Charrington allows Winston to read in the "privacy" of his room:

> In the crucial years, the fact that the Party was not a hereditary body did a great deal to neutralize opposition. The older kind of Socialist, who had been trained to fight against something called 'class privilege', assumed that what is not hereditary cannot be permanent. He did not see that the continuity of an oligarchy need not be physical, nor did he pause to reflect that hereditary aristocracies have always been shortlived, whereas adoptive organizations such as the Catholic Church, have sometimes lasted for hundreds or thousands of years. The essence of oligarchical rule is not father-to-son inheritance, but the persistence of a certain world-view and a certain way of life, imposed by the dead upon the living. A ruling group is a ruling group so long as it can nominate its successors. The Party is not concerned with perpetuating its blood but with perpetuating itself. *Who* wields power is not important, provided that the hierarchical structure remains always the same. (162)

Though Charrington has not (so far as we know) had a hand in constructing this argument, he resembles Eliot in providing an occasion for entertaining it. Winston, like Orwell, enthusiastically embraces it. Moreover, Charrington's betrayal makes it clear that his appearance of support for the argument against elites, like Eliot's, is a sham; in fact, he is a solid supporter of Oceania's hierarchical social structure, in which party members enjoy power and privilege and the "proles" form "a submerged and despised class" (50). Though the inherited elite Eliot supports in *Notes* is overtly a very different one from the elective elite represented by the party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, in assimilating his Eliot figure into the party, Orwell implies that the difference is inessential. The important issue for him, finally, is social inequality, not the identity of the group whose interests it serves, or the method by which that elite is perpetuated.

Their shared nostalgia is another point on which Orwell and Eliot, and Winston and Charrington, experience a false meeting of minds. As Good has shown (150), Orwell and Eliot, though they shared a "fearful despair" (*CEJL* I, 121) in the face of modern life, differed significantly in

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the pasts for which they longed. Judging from Winston's reveries, and those of the figure closest to him among Orwell's other nostalgic protagonists, George Bowling of *Coming up for Air* (*CUA*, 1939), Orwell's lost Arcadia is primarily the Edwardian era in England: a time "before the war, before the radio, before aeroplanes, before Hitler" (*CUA* 76), filled with simple domestic pleasures. It is an era associated with the golden light of summer and streams full of fish and a feeling commingling the sense impressions from Sunday worship with the family, "a feeling . . . that we used to call 'Church.'"[25] Eliot's longing, by contrast, is for something much older and less localized, a culture more European than English. If the frequency of allusions in the early poetry serves as a guide, it is primarily a fascination with "the world of thirteenth-century Catholicism" (*SE* 257) of Dante, a world where "church" meant the strict enforcement of dogma by a powerful priesthood, willing to accomplish its task through inquisition and torture. It is easy to see how this convergence and divergence of views is reflected in Winston's association with Charrington. Charrington charms Winston by his fondness for the relics of a lost world. His offerings entice by evoking memories not only of a cozy domestic life but also of *the sound of church bells* (77). One of the hardest lessons Winston has to learn on his arrest, however, is what Charrington really means by "Church." The program to which Charrington commits Winston at the Ministry of Love has all the marks of a medieval inquisition. O'Brien, who presides over the affair with the "air of . . . a priest" (189), brutalizes Winston until he recants his dissenting views and admits to "loving" Big Brother. In delivering Winston to this anachronistic scene, Charrington's promises to Winston have the same rhetorical force as O'Brien's adianoetic[26] utterance: "We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness." They promise him the "Golden Country" but deliver him to the glaring light of a torture chamber—or a Danteesque hell.[27] Winston's harrowing experience of confession, submission, and revelation recalls the dimactic experience of *The Waste Land*'s protagonist in "What the Thunder Said." Through confession, he learns to "give" himself over to his torturer, to "sympathize" with (or intuitively understand) the myriad signs the party has set for him, and to submit to Big Brother's "control."[28] Seduced by the promise of wheezy organs and ringing bells, he ends up hearing only the voice of "divine" authority—Orwell's dark representation of Eliot's God.

Though it may have been prompted by Eliot's disappointing actions, then, the story of Winston's betrayal by Charrington stands as Orwell's comment on the writers' brief fellow-traveling. Orwell makes the point by ironizing Winston's enthusiasm for what the shopkeeper offers him—by making

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him the dupe of a whole exercise in *adianoeta*. But his criticism of Eliot, and the ironizing of Winston, do not stop here; they also figure prominently in the dimension of Winston's story I have called an allegory of reading. Looking closely, we can see that Winston falls victim to Charrington because he is misled by the *formal* features of Eliot's modernist poetics, a fact suggesting that Orwell also recanted the support for modernism that had divided him from critics on the left.

One of the most marked ironies in Winston's story is his abandonment of his own standards for historical research when he comes to Charrington's shop. His quest, we remember, is for evidence that will contradict the party's historical narrative—evidence comparable to the lost photograph of the three dissenters. When he first ventures into the prole quarter, his standards are high; he is wise enough to see that the fragmentary memories of the old man, for example, prove nothing:

> Within twenty years at the most, he reflected, the huge and simple question, 'Was life better before the Revolution than it is now?' would have ceased once and for all to be answerable. But in effect it was unanswerable even now, since the few scattered survivors from the ancient world were incapable of comparing one age with another. They remembered a million useless things, a quarrel with a workmate, a hunt for a lost bicycle pump, the expression on a long-dead sister's face, the swirls of dust on a windy morning seventy years ago: but *all the relevant facts were outside the range of their vision. They were like the ant, which can see small objects but not large ones.* And when memory failed and written records were falsified—when that happened, the claim of the Party to have improved the conditions of human life had got to be accepted, because there did not exist, and never again could exist, any standard against which it could be tested. (71–72; my italics)

Winston's ability to sift "relevant" facts from "useless" ones, however, disappears completely in the face of Charrington's offerings, even though the reader can see that they are equally unilluminating. Though Winston takes the paperweight to be "a little chunk of history" that the party has "forgotten to alter" (112), and anticipates that the poetic fragment will prove illuminating when completed, neither item delivers what it promises. The paperweight is ultimately only a fetish arousing sentimental dreams, just another "small object" distracting the protagonist from the dangers around him. Nothing it teaches empowers him against the party; when the forces of violence are loosed against it, it shatters. The fragment, when completed, proves equally unhelpful. Not only is its message nonsensical, it also is susceptible to appropriation, as Charrington shows when he writes it into the script for Winston's arrest: "And by the way,

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while we are on the subject, 'Here comes a candle to light you to bed, here comes a chopper to chop off your head!'" (172). In describing the transformation from candle to chopper, the fragment thematizes its own versatility as history.

In dramatizing how the paperweight and the fragment entrance Winston, Orwell appears to be saying something about how modernist poetry deceives and controls its reader. As a figure for the metaphysical conceit (or perhaps for the "image" of modernist poetry),[29] the paperweight appeals to Winston because of its *solidity*, which identifies it, in his mind, with the world of empowering "fact." But his experience demonstrates that the concreteness of an image does not necessarily make it a better vehicle of "fact" than vagueness or abstraction; in the terms later explained by Jakobson, the paperweight ultimately performs a *metaphoric* function rather than the *metonymic* one Winston initially ascribes to it.[30] That Orwell is thinking specifically here about the attractions of "pure form"—attractions he had persisted in celebrating long after other critics on the left had denounced them—is suggested by his comment, already cited, that the paperweight's appeal is the greater because of its "apparent uselessness" (74). But his decision to depict Winston's attraction to the object as a form of entrapment suggests that he now accepts the arguments against autotelism: the objections Macneice raised in *Modern Poetry*, for example, against the kind of poetic image used "purely aesthetically for the sake of the image itself" (105). The paperweight's impotence in the face of the party's violence, finally, suggests that Orwell now also accepts another argument commonly leveled against modernism during the political crises of the late 30s and early 40s: the impracticality of its claims about the autonomy of the consciousness and the primacy of the private life. The shattering of the paperweight—and of the world of "privacy, love, and friendship" it represents—recalls the fate of similar metaphysical conceits in the works of Auden and Virginia Woolf in the 1930s, as those writers confronted the inevitable displacement of private concerns by public ones.[31] For Winston, of course, the smashing of the paperweight and its correlative world also means the end of the "possibility of tragedy"—a fact Orwell seems to confirm by Winston's and Julia's ignoble mutual betrayal as they are tortured.[32] But Orwell may well intend us to see the irony in Winston's narrow definition of the "tragic." Winston suffers from the blindness Raymond Williams later identified as endemic to modern criticism: So committed is he to a "traditional," liberal humanist conception of tragedy, with its focus on the individual and its precise specifications about the decorum of tragic suffering, that he fails to valorize the new form of tragedy happening all around him and exemplified by his own

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fate: a "social" tragedy, in which the noble tragic "hero" is replaced by a less noble tragic "victim."[33] Winston's conviction that tragedy belongs to an "ancient time" reflects a hypostatization of the term *tragedy* that is profoundly ideological, devaluing contemporary forms of loss.

Winston's quest to complete the nursery rhyme fragment is another parable about how Eliot's poetry distracts and misleads its readers. Orwell's first point would seem to be one about the elitism of such a method, its subordination of the reader to the superior knowledge of its author. He appears to develop this theme in the novel's appendix, where he comments that if the "fragments of the literature of the past" surviving in Oceania are just barely comprehensible in Winston's time, "In the future such fragments, even if they chanced to survive, would be unintelligible and untranslatable" (240). A second point may be one about the inadequacy of such fragments as sources of historical knowledge: Not only are they difficult to complete, but when completed they are subject to interpretation—as is anything about the past they might be said to reveal. Finally, Orwell uses Charrington's cruel appropriation of the fragment to suggest a parallel between Eliot's modernist methods and the party's efforts to rewrite the past. Charrington's sinister interpretation of "here comes a chopper" illustrates the party's practice of translating Oldspeak texts into Newspeak, so that they are "not merely changed into something different, but actually changed into something contradictory, of what they used to be" (41). But it also recalls Eliot's parodic interpretations of other authors' lines in *The Waste Land* ("But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear"), suggesting that Orwell may have seen a continuity between the two kinds of revisionism.

A final modernist device indicted in the story of Winston's entrapment, especially for the form it takes in *The Waste Land*, is the persona. Orwell wants us to appreciate that Charrington could not play the crucial role he does in the sting operation without the benefit of his mask, which enables him to espouse opinions he doesn't really hold and empathy he doesn't really feel. More significant, though, is the fact that Winston's task is to read the words not of just one persona but of *several*, none of whose utterances can be taken at face value. There is Charrington, but also the apocryphal author Goldstein, whose visage is routinely flashed on the telescreen during the daily "Two Minutes Hate." There is O'Brien, whose strong and charming facade dissolves at the Ministry of Love to reveal the weary face of a torturer. Finally, there is Big Brother himself:

> [Winston] tried with a little more success than before to summon up the image of O'Brien. 'We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness,' O'Brien had said to him. He knew what it meant,

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> or thought he knew. The place where there is no darkness was the imagined future, which one would never see, but which, by foreknowledge, one could mystically share in. But with the voice from the telescreen nagging at his ears he could not follow the train of thought further. . . . The face of Big Brother swam into his mind, displacing that of O'Brien. Just as he had done a few days earlier, he slid a coin out of his pocket and looked at it. The face gazed up at him, heavy, calm, protecting: but what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache? (80)

Big Brother's image displaces that of O'Brien in this passage because, as Winston eventually discovers, Big Brother *contains and controls* O'Brien—and all the rest of the personae he has encountered. In the drama Winston interprets, Big Brother is the great ventriloquist, using a variety of apparently autonomous characters, who utter a variety of apparently subversive utterances, to voice what is really a single, authoritarian discourse. In showing how Winston falls victim to a false appearance of heteroglossia, Orwell could again have in mind the experience of the reader of *The Waste Land*, whose initial impression of its cacaphony of voices—and therefore, perhaps, of its pluralistic ideology—also reverses itself.[34] His account of Big Brother's impersonations may be another way of suggesting that the religious weltanschauung of the late poetry was hidden in the early poetry all along: Certainly Big Brother's methods are aptly described by the poem's original working title, "He Do the Police in Different Voices."

Nineteen Eighty-Four, then, is at least partly an autobiography, in which Orwell registers not only his disappointment at some of the actions undertaken by someone he deeply admired, but also his disillusionment with the ideas and the style that had first attracted him to the poet. The story of Winston and Charrington strongly undermines the prevailing view that Orwell's sense of affinity with the poet only deepened as he grew older. It suggests that if Orwell was for a long time able to resist some of his leftist contemporaries' precipitous condemnations of Eliot, he was also eventually able to resist the charms of Eliot himself—and to accept some of the left's more thoughtful criticisms of his early work: in particular, the view that it distracts its reader from the more pressing concerns of modern life.[35] If, as Orwell himself suggested after the novel's publication,[36] the vision of tyranny in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was intended not as a fait accompli but as a warning of where society was headed if certain tendencies reigned unchecked, it appears to be cautioning its audience not to be diverted from those dangers by the deceptive "sense

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of history" offered by modernist poetry.

One final point about the genre of Orwell's text may help to counter an obvious argument against the reading I have been offering: the claim that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is *itself* an example of modernist writing. Alldritt and Zwerdling have both identified aspects of the text that align it with modernism, in contrast to the social realism Orwell wrote in the 1930s: Alldritt, its reliance on "symbolism," as exemplified by its use of "objective correlatives" like the paperweight (Alldritt 163 ff.); Zwerdling, all the "difficult" aspects of the text, particularly its allusiveness, that make it fully accessible, finally, only to the "highbrow" reader ("Rethinking the Modernist Legacy," passim). If these observations about Orwell's style are sound—and my own reading would seem to depend on them—it would hardly seem appropriate to say that Orwell ends his career with a campaign against modernism. But the significance of the text's modernist features changes when we recognize its potential to be read, not just as autobiography or allegory of reading, but as *Künstlerroman*. Winston Smith is not just a bad interpreter of Charrington's (and O'Brien's) literary offerings, but a *writer*, as attached to the diary he buys at Charrington's shop as he is to his paperweight. His quest, like that of Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is in some sense a search for an *aesthetic*, a form of expression that will enable him to articulate a repressed "conscience." And in all *Künstlerromanen*, the protagonist's developed tastes beg to be read self-reflexively, as a statement of the principles governing the telling of his own story, which is his telling of his story, *the text itself*.[37] Winston's fatal romance with paperweight and allusive fragment, then, in his role as writer, may be Orwell's palinode for the turn his own writing took when he abandoned documentary for modernist allegory.[38] The symbolic paperweight and the illusive/allusive figure of Charrington cross narrative levels; they are objects both for Winston's interpretation and for ours. And Winston's hermeneutic problems—particularly his failure to recognize who the members of the party really are—are remarkably prescient of those characterizing the novel's reception.

NOTES

[1] *Nineteen Eighty-Four* may not be the first place where Orwell constructs a fictional representation of Eliot. Sherry has found a parody of the poet in Mr. Tallboys, the farcical prelate in *A Clergyman's Daughter*. See p. 89.

[2] For Orwell's letter to Eliot concerning the translation of Roberti, see *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 1 of 4 vols., p. 72. Subsequent references to this collection will appear in parentheses in the text with the abbreviation *CEJL*, followed by the volume number. The attempt to

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publish Roberti was made in 1931, and to publish *Down and Out in Paris and London* in 1932. Eliot rejected *Down and Out in Paris and London* on the grounds that it was "too short" and "too loosely constructed . . ." (Crick 214). The translation was neither solicited nor completed.

[3] In a letter of 29 Nov. 1943, Orwell invited Eliot to contribute to *Tribune*, of which he had become literary editor. Eliot did not take up his offer; he had, however, in 1942, accepted Orwell's invitation to read "What the Thunder Said" on a program on BBC Indian services. During the 1940s Orwell repeatedly sought lunch dates with the poet. For useful surveys of Orwell's overtures to Eliot, both personal and professional, see Good and Matthews. Good has noted that Faber's conservative reputation makes Orwell's decisions to submit his manuscripts there harder to account for than Eliot's rejections (141).

[4] Harold Laski attacked Eliot in *Faith, Reason and Civilisation* (1944).

[5] See Good, 144–46. Orwell makes the point in "Poetry and the Microphone" (written 1943, published 1945; *CEJL* II, 333), and Eliot in the essay on Marie Lloyd (1923; *Selected Essays* 458). Subsequent references to *Selected Essays* will appear in the text with the abbreviation *SE*.

[6] Gordon Comstock of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* (1936), and George Bowling of *Coming up for Air* (1939). Good notes that Comstock's poetry is "derivative from Eliot in vision, if not in versification" (140), and cites as his example his verse beginning "Sharply the menacing wind" (*Keep the Aspidistra Flying* 38). Sherry discusses Bowling's nostalgia in connection with Eliot on 92–3.

[7] A regime that "shut[s] you up in an artificial universe in which you have no standards of comparison" (*CEJL* II, 135). Orwell refers to totalitarian regimes generally, but cites Stalin's specifically. "The really frightening thing about totalitarianism," he says elsewhere, "is not that it commits 'atrocities' but that it attacks the concept of objective truth: it claims to control the past as well as the future" (*CEJL* III, 88).

[8] Sherry, Matthews, and Good all trace this increasing tolerance.

[9] Alldritt's thesis is that the modernist (or "symbolist") style of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is a sign of Orwell's resistance to leftist orthodoxy, which repudiated modernism; see especially 177–78. Sherry describes *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "symbolic fables reminiscent at times of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Eliot's *Waste Land*" (35). Zwerdling says that the modernist elements in the novel coexist with elements from the realist aesthetic favored by the left ("Rethinking the Modernist Legacy" passim).

[10] The citizen of Oceania "tolerates present-day conditions . . . because he has no standards of comparison" (164).

[11] Doublethink involves many types of self-deception, but the one of working "consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed" is key (27).

[12] The shop is also testimony to the autobiographical aspect of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As Orwell recounts in one of his Saturday Essays for the *Evening Standard* in 1946, he found the junk shops in the poorer parts of London—Greenwich, Islington, and Holloway—irresistible. See "Just Junk" 6.

[13] It has been suggested to me that Charrington, with his "long nose and thick spectacles and his bowed shoulders" (116), is stereotypically Jewish. The point is, I think, debatable, and in any case, not fatal to my association of him with Eliot, since Charrington's appearance is by nature protean. If it is correct,

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there may be an explanation for the phenomenon in the figure of Goldstein, the apocryphal leader of the Brotherhood in Oceania, whose crimes are regularly depicted on the telescreen. Goldstein has a "lean Jewish face," with "long thin nose near the end of which a pair of spectacles [is] perched"; Winston is familiar with rumors that "Somewhere or other he was still alive and hatching his conspiracies . . . perhaps even . . . in Oceania itself" (14). Goldstein's function, like Charrington's, is to draw out opposition to Big Brother so that it might be repressed, and his Jewishness is crucial to his power to do so—a badge of his position as outcast. Orwell cannot be suggesting an identity between Goldstein and Charrington, since neither has a stable identity, but he may well be suggesting a parallel in their functions and operations.

[14] Compare Pound's rejection of rhetoric (or "theory") in "The Serious Artist" (1913):

> The theorist . . . constantly proceeds as if his own case, his own limits and predilections were the typical case, or even as if it were the universal. He is constantly urging someone else to behave as he, the theorist, would like to behave. Now art never asks anybody to do anything, or to think anything, or to be anything. It exists as the trees exist, you can admire, you can sit in the shade, you can pick bananas, you can cut firewood, you can do as you jolly well please. (*Literary Essays* 46)

[15] Like Orwell's character, Eliot's old man is a "dull head" who has "lost his passion" (*Collected Poems* 29, 31). Ironically, Gerontian also utters a warning Winston would have done well to heed as he embarked on his historical research:

> Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving. (30)

Subsequent references to Eliot's *Collected Poems* will appear in the text with the abbreviation *CP*.

[16] The poems appeared in the July 1915 issue.

[17] Especially the apathetic speaker, the indifferent typist, and the helpless Thames-daughters, figures Eliot, like Orwell, contrasts with more heroic tragic figures.

[18] See, for example, "A Valediction," cited by Eliot in "The Metaphysical Poets" (*SE* 282).

[19] Note how elsewhere Winston's hell recalls Prufrock's: "He felt as though he were wandering on the forests of the sea bottom, lost in a monstrous world where he himself was the monster" (20).

[20] Subsequent references to this volume will appear in the text with the abbreviation *CP*. For the sterility of Winston's and Julia's liaison, see 169: "Out of their bodies no child would ever come."

[21] See Good 155. Good also connects the doctrine of incuriosity in *Four Quartets* with party doctrine; see 152–53.

[22] Good has noted the applicability of this passage in "Orwell and Eliot" 152.

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[23] From a letter in the possession of Mrs. Valerie Eliot and communicated by her to *The Times*, 6 Jan. 1969. Cited by Crick 458. Crick claims that Orwell bore Eliot no personal ill will for the letter.

[24] See, for example, Fyvel 50 and Crick 458.

[25] Compare Winston's vision of the "Golden Country," which includes "a clear, slow-moving stream where dace were swimming in the pools under the willow trees" (23) with the many descriptions of fishing in *Coming up for Air*. Compare also Bowling's nostalgia for "a feeling . . . that we used to call 'Church'" with Winston's nostalgic attraction to reveries about (and the ruined remains of) churches (77, 98–99).

[26] Richard Lanham defines *adianoeta* as "an expression that has an obvious meaning and an unsuspected secret one beneath." His example is what one says to a good friend who is also a poor novelist: "I will lose no time in reading your new book" (*Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* 2).

[27] Of possible relevance here is Orwell's snide comment about Eliot's perspective on modern life, in a letter to Brenda Salkeld in June 1933: "as the spoilt darling of the Church Times [Eliot] is bound to point out that all this wouldn't have happened *if we had not shut our eyes to the Light*" (*CEJL* I, 121; my italics). The link between Winston's betrayal and Orwell's is further suggested by the shades of Eliot's early poetry that haunt the proceedings. O'Brien informs Winston that, before filling him up with the spirit of Big Brother, he will make him "hollow" (198).

[28] These, of course, are the three instructions given by the thunder, which Calvin Bedient describes as "an authoritarian monologuist" (197). Bedient's reading of "What the Thunder Said" (168 ff.) is exemplary, demonstrating how the protagonist's chaotic vision culminates in an act of submission to a divinity.

[29] That Orwell was well acquainted with imagist poetics is suggested by the similarity between his tenets for writers in "Politics and the English Language" and those Pound sets out for the poet in his imagist manifestos. The similarity extends both to form and to content.

[30] I rely here on Jakobson's discussion of the distinction in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," ch. 5 of *Fundamentals of Language* (1956), and on David Lodge's lucid applications of that distinction. In their sense, metonymic writing is typified by realist and documentary literature, and metaphoric writing by romantic, symbolist, and modernist literature. In metonymic writing, narrative elements are arranged according to contiguous relationships in nature; in metaphorical writing, according to similarities and differences among themselves. Metonymic writing, therefore, is referential or scientific; metaphorical writing, autotelic. Winston grants the paperweight a metonymic function when he conceives it as "a little chunk of history" that the party has "forgotten to alter" (112)—an intractable historical "fact," similar in its evidentiary potential to the photograph of the rebels. It becomes part of a metaphoric structure when he constructs his conceit, enumerating equivalents for it from more than one semantic (and historical) plane. In Orwell's narrative, then, an object initially embraced as a means of *confronting* actuality becomes a means of *evading* actuality: an accurate account of the developing reputation of the modernist "image."

[31] See, for example, Auden's figure in "A Summer Night" (1933), a "ring" of friends violated by the "crumpling flood" of political unrest (118), and Woolf's

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central conceit in *The Waves* (1931), the "globe" of a community of friends "whose walls are made of Percival" (145), and which is shattered when Percival, friend and political hero, is killed enforcing British rule in India.

[32] For another claim that the lovers' betrayal of each other represents a decentering of the "humanist" conception of tragedy, see Ingersoll 78. In Ingersoll's reading, the novel simply affirms Winston's conviction about the impossibility of such tragedy, representing the Holocaust as the event that rendered humanist ideas about the ennobling value of pain and loss untenable. I would suggest that the novel goes further, ironizing Winston's commitment to the humanist ideal as it demonstrates the other ways in which his nostalgia is an ideological trap. For another discussion of the critique of the humanist conception of tragedy in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, see Weatherly.

[33] For Williams's discussion of how the traditional conception of tragedy has functioned to devalue contemporary forms of pain and suffering, see *Modern Tragedy* 11–15, 45–46; for the "deep crisis" surrounding the failure of modern writers and critics to connect "personal" and "social" tragedy, 120 ff.; for how the traditional tragic "hero" is displaced by the "victim" in modern tragic dramas, 87–105. A detailed study of how Winston's fate resembles that of the protagonists of other modern tragedies, like Willy Loman, remains to be written.

[34] Bedient's account of *The Waste Land* seems especially applicable to Winston's experience:

> *The Waste Land* is never really, and is finally far from being, carnivalesque; instead, it arranges the *appearance* of a riot of tones and images and languages with the cold cunning of a Hieronymo and with no less an intention than to silence the pretensions of language and literature once and for all. (8)

Some critics have suggested that the force of discipline and repression later revealed in the authoritarian voice of the thunder can be detected in the poem's early cacaphony of voices, particularly in the impatient command of "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" (see Schulze 21) and in Tiresias's impulse to order the chaos of the typist's room with heroic quatrains (see Bedient 126).

[35] Orwell's reevaluation of Eliot's poetics is anticipated by a 1944 comment on Joyce, in which he notes that the novelist's aspiration "to be a 'pure' artist, 'above the battle' and indifferent to politics"—an aspiration he had praised in essays like "Inside the Whale"—is rendered obsolete by the present war (*CEJL* III, 107).

[36] See *CEJL* IV, 502, where Orwell denies that the novel is uncompromisingly pessimistic: "I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe . . . that something resembling it *could* arrive." For discussions of Orwell's conception of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as a cautionary novel, see Shelden 473 ff. and Zwerdling, *Orwell and the Left*, 106–08.

[37] For Winston's efforts to write, see 9, 10–11, 20–21, 30, 66–67, 70–76, 83–84. Orwell may be suggesting a parallel with Stephen Dedalus's diary entries, which are clearly notes toward the telling of the story that contains them. In implying that Winston, like Stephen, survives to tell his story, my reading obviously supports the more optimistic readings of Winston's fate in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It may even be used to support the argument that the Newspeak Appendix is Winston's, evidence of his eventual recovery. That the Appendix and the main

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text are the products of a single author may be suggested by the fact that it is in the Appendix that we find the point about the ineffectiveness of Eliotic fragments as historical educators (a point consistent with the theme of Winston's story):

> When Oldspeak had been once and for all superseded, the last link with the past would have been severed. History had already been rewritten, but fragments of the literature of the past survived here and there, imperfectly censored, and so long as one retained one's knowledge of Oldspeak it was possible to read them. *In the future such fragments, even if they chanced to survive, would be unintelligible and untranslatable.* (240; my italics)

The comment aptly describes the fate of densely allusive poetry like *The Waste Land* in a world like our own, where discourse has become simplified, and the codes necessary for deciphering the fragments are no longer taught.

[38] In this reading, Orwell's interest in documentary is represented by Winston's fascination with the photograph.

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Charles and the Hopeful Monster: Postmodern Evolutionary Theory in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

Tony E. Jackson

The French Lieutenant's Woman clearly enough tells a story involving the great crisis of Darwinism in Victorian England. But we should look closely at the precise way in which Fowles represents this crisis, otherwise we may miss the significance of the Darwin of our own time, which is equally important in the novel.[1] The book makes it plain that we have this later Darwin to consider. Of his protagonist, Charles Smithson, the narrator tells us that "Charles called himself a Darwinist, and yet he had not really understood Darwin. But then, nor had Darwin himself" (45). We here in the late twentieth century have corrected at least some of these earlier misunderstandings and in the process of doing so have defined ourselves historically. For as Dr. Grogan says at one point, *The Origin of Species* is "about the living . . . not the dead" (131). Our understanding of evolution determines in a profound way our understanding of ourselves as living beings. And of course modern culture is "a culture dominated by evolutionary ideas" (Beer 5) to the point that many who have never actually read any evolutionary theory take the basic idea for granted.

Writers such as Gillian Beer, Sally Shuttleworth, and Redmond O'Hanlon have studied the effects of an actual reading knowledge of Darwin on famous Victorian writers. George Levine, on the other hand, in *Darwin and the Novelists,* has discussed the way Darwinism permeates Victorian realism, even "among writers who probably did not know any science first hand" (3). But Levine does not set out simply to show that fictional narratives and Darwin's evolutionary theory get constructed in similar ways. Rather he aims

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> to shadow forth a Darwin more disruptive, perhaps, than even the greatest of his literary followers can suggest, a Darwin who, if fully absorbed by his contemporary novelists, might well have led to other kinds of narratives. (22)

In other words, Levine will read Victorian novels in light of what we *now* know of Darwin's ideas. For Darwinism has changed since Darwin himself was alive. In the same way that Darwinism embodied the assumptions of the Victorian novel and, conversely, the Victorian novel embodied the Victorian Darwin, so we shall find that the postmodern or "fully absorbed" Darwin embodies the postmodern novel and, conversely, the postmodern novel—in this case *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a paradigmatic example of one of those "other kinds of narratives" suggested by Levine—embodies the postmodern Darwin. To explain this relationship, we will first need to establish what seems postmodern about recent Darwinian theory, and having done this we will then examine Fowles's novel.

By the postmodern Darwin, I mean that in the last 30 to 40 years certain ideas have become especially prominent in evolutionary theory, and these ideas are of a kind with a host of other ideas that many of us lump under the term postmodernism. Of course developments in evolutionary theory have arisen from within the scientific disciplines involved. But it is also true that disciplinary histories are not purely self-contained affairs. Historical periods may be defined by related complexes of thought appearing contemporaneously across wide areas of knowledge and interest. The elements of postmodern thinking that will be most relevant here revolve, as always, around the fundamental critique of metaphysical absolutes of all kinds, a metaphysical absolute being any representation that is taken consciously or unconsciously as entirely self-contained, self-identical, self-present, and therefore outside the realm of culture, history, desire, and ideology. The critique may be direct, as in overtly deconstructive kinds of interpretations, or it may be indirect, a corollary to certain other analyses. Thus Thomas Kuhn's recasting of the history of scientific revolutions plays a part in the critique of metaphysics even though this is not the specific aim of his argument. In any case, whatever the particular realm in which the critique of metaphysical absolutes occurs, one common outcome is the discovery that absolutes of this kind always function as unconscious anchors for a certain kind of identity. So the critique typically involves two most general results: It reveals that a given absolute is in fact a construction of history, culture, and desire, and it reveals that the construction has been misrecognized as an absolute because a certain self or cultural or sexual identity depends

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on not seeing the construction as a construction.

History has been a primary realm of investigation for the postmodern critique, and one common conclusion has been that chronological, developmental histories operate, simply as a function of their narrative form, to establish the absolute presence of a certain sense of self. The teleological form of the conventional narrative history presupposes the self-evident truth of cause and effect over time and of historical "facts" that precede the constructions of histories about those facts. One way or another, the influential writings of such thinkers as Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Paul de Man, and Kuhn (we will return to these below) have shown that this notion of history is not supportable as it has traditionally been conceived. Taking the critique further along, Foucault, de Man, and those coming after them have shown how this kind of history is unavoidably essentialist or anthropocentric: Not only historical fact but also the self who is the implied subject of this version of history is assumed by the discursive form of narrative history to exist as a kind of Platonic essence outside of that discourse. But this subject is in fact a production of historical and other discourses, and therefore it turns out that the subject of narrative history is a comforting illusion. Postmodern interpretations of history, in whatever realm they occur, work to avoid essentialism of this kind, and as a result they tend not to be narrative histories in the traditional sense.

To turn now to the idea of postmodern evolutionary theory, perhaps the most distinguishing difference between late twentieth-century and nineteenth-century Darwinists involves a strict avoidance of an anthropocentric evolutionary story—that is, the version of natural selection in which *Homo sapiens* always becomes the *telos* or goal of the evolutionary path, the version in which, as Stephen Jay Gould has said, "the word itself [evolution] becomes a synonym for *progress*" (*Wonderful Life* 32). This problem may be impossible to avoid entirely: It seems self-evidently true that we human beings are superior in key ways to all other life, and since evolution has brought us about, then we must be the progressive aim of evolution. But this is not a necessary conclusion from Darwin's thinking. Darwin himself was inconsistent with respect to the issue of evolution as progress. For instance, in *The Origin of Species* he writes that "natural selection, or the survival of the fittest, does not necessarily include progressive development" (128). But then in *The Descent of Man* he claims that humanity stands at "the very summit of the organic scale" (797). The assumed existence of this kind of scale in material nature is the ideological core of social Darwinism. Current Darwinists, even those who disagree on other significant issues, reject such thinking. Thus, both Daniel Dennett

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on the one hand and Stephen Jay Gould on the other, open recent, important books with a discussion of this problem. In *Darwin's Dangerous Idea*, Dennett writes of "the most common misunderstanding of Darwinism: the idea that Darwin showed that evolution by natural selection is a procedure *for* producing us" (56). Gould opens *Wonderful Life* claiming that "we usually choose to construct [an evolutionary] ranking of implied worth," the top rank always being occupied by ourselves, and that the "familiar iconographies of evolution are all directed . . . toward reinforcing a comfortable view of human inevitability and superiority" (42, 28).

So recent Darwinism rejects anthropocentrism in much the same way that so many recent investigations in the humanities—from deconstruction to gender studies to new historicism to postcolonial studies—reject various kinds of essentialisms. But while all Darwinists reject a human-centered teleological story, they do not necessarily agree about just what constitutes such a story. One great contemporary point of disagreement remains the same as in Darwin's day: how to include chance in evolution. If natural selection is not to be a disguised theology, it must include randomness, but since scientific theories typically set out to show the determined and orderly in nature, the trick is how to include randomness without giving up a sufficiently compelling sense of order. Darwin's own views on chance are, as Levine says, "contradictorily stated throughout his books, his letters, his journals" (92), but in any case while Darwin was aware of "the probabilistic nature of selection, the modern evolutionist emphasizes this even more" (Mayr 164). Still, as Richard Dawkins puts it, "We can accept a certain amount of luck in our explanations, but not too much. The question is *how* much?" (139). In recent decades we find two most prominent considerations of chance. Writers such as Dennett and Dawkins stress one version, which is sometimes known as the neo-Darwinian synthesis (Dennett 20, Mayr ch. 9). Evolutionary change happens as a function of genetic mutation. Any given mutation occurs at random. Nonetheless, chance gives way to a determined path of development when we look at the long run of evolution: The "whole sequence of cumulative steps constitutes anything but a chance process" (Dawkins 43). Fowles, in his final epigraph, brings a version— Martin Gardner's—of this Darwin overtly into the novel:

> Evolution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations in the nucleic acid helix caused by natural radiation) cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive. (361)

But as we shall see, Fowles's novel actually gives us a version of Darwin

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after the model of Stephen Jay Gould. Gould argues that it is anthropocentric to constrain chance as Dennett and Dawkins (and Darwin) do. "Perhaps," he says,

> the grim reaper of anatomical designs is only Lady Luck in disguise. Or perhaps the actual reasons for survival do not support conventional ideas of cause as complexity, improvement, or anything moving *at all* humanward. (48, emphasis added)

To Gould, the assumption or attribution of any global rightness of evolutionary outcome is an unjustified, teleological repression of the significance of randomness. Any developmental evolutionary narrative assumes the rightness of the ending and in doing so falsely attributes a human value scale to nonhuman, material reality. As a result Gould writes: "*Placement in time is conflated with judgment of worth*" (39). Since all teleologies are human constructions, all are anthropocentric. Gould argues that this kind of story appeals because it makes us feel better: it "[nurtures] our hopes for a universe of intrinsic meaning defined in our terms" (Gould 43). With such a conclusion Gould's alignment with other postmodern versions of history becomes ever more apparent. We may recall, for instance, Paul de Man's argument that all teleological history depends on a "temporal hierarchy that resembles a parental structure in which the past is like an ancestor begetting, in a moment of unmediated presence, a future capable of repeating in its turn the same generative process" (164). Similarly, Michel Foucault rejects teleology because such a history "assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession" (78). Gould's "intrinsic meaning" is the same as de Man's "unmediated presence" and Foucault's "immobile forms."

The most famous Victorian response to Darwin was outraged rejection. But the next most famous response was the anthropocentric one that, while admitting the loss of supernatural prestige for humanity, nonetheless found comfort in the fact that at least we were at the top of the natural order. This latter is just the self-satisfying understanding of Charles, the earnest Darwinist, at the beginning of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. To Charles, the discoveries of Darwin provide "an immensely reassuring orderliness in existence," an "edificiality of time, in which inexorable laws . . . very conveniently arranged themselves for the survival of the fittest and best," the latter of course being humanity, and particularly humanity as represented by Charles himself (45). This understanding manages to preserve the kind of unjustified value judgment that had in fact been central to the pre-Darwinian version of the order of life, the ladder of nature put forth by the Swedish botanist, Linnaeus. Such thinking, then, ignores

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what is most unsettling about Darwin's ideas. As we shall see, Charles learns the falseness of this understanding in a very distinctive way.

To complete our discussion of Darwinian theory, Gould's inclusion of chance makes him the most postmodern of contemporary Darwinists. It has led him to put forth a theory of change, called punctuated equilibrium, that stresses abruptness and discontinuity rather than the more conventional gradualist story, and thus he is the Darwinian equivalent of, again, Thomas Kuhn and Michel Foucault. Kuhn, like Gould, holds that the actual historical record does not support a gradualist "development-by-accumulation" story, and that arbitrariness and retrospectivity (we will return to retrospectivity below) are essential to historiography (Kuhn ch. 1). In light of this kind of historiographical conviction, Gould has revived the idea of the "hopeful monster" (*Panda's Thumb* 186–93), which is the notion that key changes in evolution involve the relatively sudden appearance of a relatively radical newness on the scene.[2] Such newness will by its nature seem monstrous and alien in relation to the already established kinds of life around it. Further, it will be at first only "hopeful" because it is by chance that the mutation will have found itself in an amenable environment and thus be able to reproduce itself successfully.

Now although Darwinian theory derives from the biological realm, these ideas have always been transplanted into the very different bodies of psychology and culture, and this is what occurs in Fowles's novel. Most importantly in this respect, we clearly see Charles undergo a kind of mental evolution—a change from a Victorian to a twentieth-century sense of self—brought about by the manipulations of Sarah. But right away we must be wary of the implications of moving from biology to these other realms because of the old and real danger of social Darwinism. Still, if we agree to the truth of biological evolution, it is difficult to resist the idea that what explains the body ought to explain, at least in certain very important ways, the mind and self. But this is where Gould's ideas prove useful. Gould's inclusion of chance and disallowance of teleology prevent the notion of psychocultural evolution from becoming another form of social-Darwinist essentialism. In other words, if we consider how an idea or culture or self emerged as a process of natural selection in Gould's terms, then we will be careful not to argue or imply that the idea, culture, or self *had* to appear when and as it did. For as soon as we have done that, we have created a teleological explanation that, intentionally or not, reveals that endpoint to have always been destined to happen, and so to have always been what *ought* to happen, the right ending to the story. We have written a human value judgment, which can only come from the realm of individual and cultural desire, into material reality. The immediate

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corollary is that other endings are somehow wrong or inferior, and *ought* to be wrong or inferior because the material universe has created them that way. A postmodern Darwinism can at least try to avoid this.

So we need to look again at the emergence of the twentieth-century or existentialist self in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Needless to say, other critics have discussed the way Sarah brings about the great change in Charles, but too often Sarah is represented as a superior type of self-consciousness, the magus figure who comes to *teach* Charles the knowledge she already commands. Katherine Tarbox, for instance, says that Sarah "teaches . . . by parable, by telling stories" (71). Tarbox sees all the events, from the meetings on the Undercliff to the sex in Exeter to Sarah's disappearance, as consciously planned by Sarah with the specific goal of giving Charles an "education" in existentialism. Sarah "sees that Charles, caught in an evolutionary incident and metaphorically buried in a landslide, is becoming fossilized. She simply tries to show him the way out" (71). Similarly, Ellen McDaniel writes that Sarah maneuvers with a purpose, that she has a specific strategy "to help . . . Charles . . . reconstruct" his life (36). In Charles Scruggs's fine reading, one that like my own deals directly with the evolution of consciousness, he speaks regularly of what Sarah "sees" about the meaning of life, of what Sarah "realizes" about the existential predicament, and of Sarah's "epiphany." But he must also add that such claims are "not to say that Sarah understands the problem philosophically. The extent of her awareness of any of these things is problematical" (103). And indeed it is. Fowles allows us only a very limited certainty about Sarah's motives. We can see *that* she plans, but as to the extent of her plans and as to the motives of her plans, Fowles leaves us with an enigma.

And I would argue that a postmodern version of evolution can best explain the enigma. The representation of Sarah, the enigmatically new, the hopeful monster of change, helps us to see the kind of evolutionary theory that actually emerges in the book. And, at the same time, evolutionary theory helps us to see the nature of Sarah. She is a suddenly occurring new kind of self, and Charles is the means by which the new self secures its survival. Newness in this version of evolution has a certain important temporal quality. Recent Darwinism continually stresses that the new can only be known with hindsight. Dennett says of the beginning of a new species that "you can't tell that it is occurring at the time it occurs! You can only tell much later that it has occurred, retrospectively crowning an event when you discover that its sequels have a certain property" (96). Newness of this kind, like Lyotard's postmodern art, can only be the origin for "what *will have been done*" (81) in the history of the

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self. Strictly speaking, a given new evolutionary event should always be described in the future anterior tense that writers such as Derrida and Lacan have made central to recent understandings of temporality. Given this, it must be the case that the hopeful monster will not, in a crucial way, know what it is. In other words, the original appears in some important way fully formed as new, as the first step in what can only later on become definable as a trail through the wilderness of raw history. It will not have had the experience of passing *from* being the old *to* being the new, and so will not have had the contrasting knowledge by which to know the full significance of its newness. In biological history this will not be relevant, but as we shall see, in the history of the self it will be crucial. For the hopeful monster in the history of the self will not quite know why it is acting as it does. Which brings us back to the question of Sarah's knowledge.

Despite the title of the book, we have primarily the story of Charles. Even in chapter 36, the one chapter most Sarah's own, the narrator says right out that he simply does not "intend to find out what was going on in her mind" (221). Nonetheless, the narrator himself mentions Sarah as "the protagonist." But of course he does so in the midst of admitting his own ignorance: "My problem" as narrator, he says, "is simple—what Charles wants is clear? It is indeed. But what the protagonist wants is not so clear; and I am not at all sure where she is at the moment" (317). And in fact throughout the novel Fowles manages to keep the protagonist available to us only in the way she is available to Charles. Like Charles, we are constantly seeing Sarah with "her face . . . half hidden" (136), with "her face turned away" (100), constantly looking down at her hands or out to the sea. In all the most dramatic scenes between Charles and Sarah, descriptions of her actions are peppered with the ambiguous phrase *as if* and words such as *seems* and *almost*. These descriptive ambiguities can of course support the idea that Sarah has actually planned what, to Charles, appears to happen by chance.

I will give only three of many examples. The second time Charles runs into Sarah in the Undercliff, she acknowledges him but "seemed to hesitate, as if she would have turned back if she could" (98). After what we learn of her later, this *could* mean that she was already setting up a trap or lesson, depending on which ending one favors. When Charles advises her that the French lieutenant, if he is worthy of her, will seek her out even if she leaves Lyme, he receives only a "long silence." Moving, as he so often does "so that he could see the side of her face," he finds that "her expression was strange, almost calm, as if what he had said had confirmed some deep knowledge in her heart" (102). Retrospectively, this *could* mean she now knows that Charles will follow her if she disappears

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after luring him into love. This scene ends with a batch of such "as ifs." Later, when Sarah asks Charles to be her confessor, he asks, why him? She begins "as if the question had been expected—to speak rapidly, almost repeating a speech, a litany learned by heart" (116). This *may* mean that she has rehearsed the moment. We cannot know for sure until the end, and clearly enough this trail of ambiguities will equally well lead to more than one ending.

And yet we do know that Sarah has planned some of her actions, at least to a degree. She intentionally exposes herself to Mrs. Fairley, and she tells the lie about the French lieutenant. We witness her setting up the scene in Exeter. But in fact only after Exeter can we look back and suspect that she may have been planning from the very first. To help clear up our uncertainty, we may consider Sarah's own understanding of herself and her situation. But we cannot, for the most part, be sure of these either. We can be sure that Sarah feels entirely out of place in the world. She feels born to suffer, born to be isolated. It seems to her "ordained" as part of the nature of things that the world is the "generality to which [she] must be the exception" (139). But of course her own actions only intensify these feelings. At one point she blames those around her for their lack of compassion and says that "whatever sins I have committed, it is not right that I should suffer so much" (116). And yet she herself has taken action to cause people to reject her. Educated above her own class, she suffers in the conventional way that governesses in Victorian novels suffered. Nonetheless, she feels that, not just because of her life circumstances but because of her nature, she categorically cannot be happy. It is not that governesses in general are unhappy, but only, as she says, "All like myself" (138). But then there do not appear, really, to be any others quite like her, certainly not in Victorian fiction; and neither Charles nor the narrator can ever quite categorize her, even though on the surface her story and situation seem common to the point of stereotype. And of course she hides the knowledge of the French lieutenant's marriage so that she will be what she "must be. An outcast" (145).

The fabric of Sarah's self-understanding, then (before the endings), is woven from negative threads. And the narrator relates this sense of self to the existential self-image that he associates with the twentieth century. In a clearly Sartrean moment, Sarah speaks of feeling alienated even from the world of objects: "even things—mere chairs, tables, mirrors—conspire to increase my solitude," she says (139). She confesses that her choice to marry shame by following the French lieutenant gives her a "freedom" that others around her cannot understand, one that enables her to be "truly not like other women," to be "nothing," "hardly human,"

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to have achieved a kind of negative superiority from which she can "almost pity" those who have not made this kind of choice (142). This is of course the language of existentialism, but significantly, while the narrator actually mentions several times the word *existentialism* with respect to Charles, he never does so with respect to Sarah. We will return to Charles below, but what matters here is that although Sarah can describe herself in these terms, she cannot in an important way unravel their import. Of course she knows that she is miserable and isolated, but she lacks the understanding by which to assess what her misery and isolation mean. In one sense this lack is simply part of her nature. She is unique in part because she cannot think things out, cannot analyze the sources and meanings of her own case. Her intelligence, as the narrator tells us, consists of "an instinctual profundity of insight" (48). Hers is "not in the least an analytical or problem-solving" intellect. She possesses an "uncanny" ability to classify and make "poetic judgments" about people but "without being able to say how" she does so. She is simply able "to understand [others], in the fullest sense of that word" (47). Evidently the fullest sense of the word does not include the ability or necessity to consider rationally. The new kind of self has not *learned* to be perceptive in her distinctive manner. Rather, she simply is this way, naturally, just as she is naturally isolated and alienated.

Further, though she understands others in an instinctive, prerational way, she seems bound not to understand herself at all. At the end of the scene in Exeter when her deceptions have been revealed, she can only say: "Do not ask me to explain what I have done. I cannot explain it. It is not to be explained" (279). And much later, in the scene that leads into both the "happy" and the existential ending, she says: "I am not to be understood even by myself. And I can't tell you why, but I believe my happiness depends on my not understanding" (354). So we have a paradox: The protagonist is blessed with a clearly exceptional mind, and yet she cannot understand her own situation. Sarah's lack here derives from the fact that she is unable to historicize herself. On the individual level, because she has always been as she is, she cannot see herself in relation to an other condition from which she has emerged. Further, because she appears as a case of historical newness, there has not yet been formulated a vocabulary by which to categorize her condition in general. In other words, neither her own individual history nor the larger, public histories—philosophical, psychological, biological—offer her a means of knowing herself historically. Thus, although she can describe her pain and anguish and loneliness well enough, she cannot see that just this batch of qualities themselves constitute a specifiable historical condition. In an important way she has experience

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without knowledge.

All these traits work to show that Sarah "has attained selfhood before the novel begins," but this does not mean that she "knows who she is and in her own freedom . . . knows how to encourage the grasping of freedom by others" (Palmer 75). She may have planned—Grogan is wrong to say that "no one of foresight could have behaved as she has" (Fowles 179)—but the fact that she herself cannot explain her own actions suggests that she has acted almost spontaneously, simply as a part of being who she is, rather than as a part of some elaborate, preconceived design. Robert Huffaker, also reading for evolution, grasps this unconscious element in Sarah's machinations when he says that "Sarah, although she guides [Charles] into the agonizing process that leads eventually to freedom for them both, is not necessarily aware, in a rational sense, of what her proceedings are effecting" (109). But then Huffaker goes on to speak of Sarah in Jungian terms, which ignores both the very anti-Jungian nature of existentialism as well as the "fully absorbed" Darwin that we find in the novel. As the narrator says at the very end, she seems to be acting what she knows (365). But this does not imply that she knows what she acts, and the distinction between the two statements matters because the existentialist, properly speaking, creates herself authentically by making very conscious choices of action.

So, given all this, we may say that Sarah appears on the Victorian scene as a mutation among existing self-representations, a kind of hopeful monster. A hopeful monster, a suddenly new mutation, must encounter the contingently occurring environment into which it is thrown. This is why it is "hopeful." It has neither chosen nor been chosen to be what it is because of the environment; therefore, it is chance as to whether the environment will favor it or not. In terms of the evolution of the self, the new type will almost certainly be feared and rejected simply because it will not be categorizable. It will presumably share some traits with the already existing set of qualities by which kinds of people are known. In other words, it will be recognizable generally as a human being, but beyond this it will be all wrong. Obviously enough, this is true of Sarah. Though she comes in the form of a Victorian governess, in fact she fits none of the roles by which women could be known at the time. And Fowles does not really help us to know why she should be as she is. Given only a bare minimum of her history, we can make only the most vague and general sociohistorical explanations for her situation. After all, Jane Eyre lived much the same life as Sarah but did not grow up to be an existentialist.

With respect to the analogue of the evolution of consciousness, the hopeful monster would, at least at first, also be unable to recognize *itself*

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as any kind of positive being. As we have seen, this is the case with Sarah. Since human self-images always involve the reinforcement or mirroring of other self-images, a wholly new self-image will have no way to apprehend itself, except negatively. And worse, in an *unamenable* environment any new mutation would constantly make itself more monstrous the more it fulfilled its newness. As Sarah acts to force out into the open her newness and difference, as she becomes ever more fully just her unique self, she steadily becomes more outcast from any of the ostensibly healthy roles around her. On the one hand, then, she seems to act from some unusually coherent inner core. This is the quality that strikes us in the flawless way she manipulates Charles. But on the other hand, it is not a core that we can recognize, certainly not in Victorian terms.

Since the actions—the lie about the French lieutenant, letting herself be seen by Mrs. Fairly, seducing and abandoning Charles—that seem self-destructive in fact bring Sarah to be more fully the new kind of self that she already was, this means that she never really goes through a significant change, never really knows herself *differently*, which is the essence of transformative self-recognition. She does, however, lead Charles to retrace the painful steps of seduction, abandonment, and public estrangement that reinforced her "natural" condition. That is, the plot of the novel involves Sarah leading Charles through a repetition of her own story: She becomes the enigmatic seducer in relation to himself as the duped lover. Why? Even after creating the story about the French lieutenant, she still remains only an anomaly of alienation, only a strangely unique kind of outcast. For this reason, she is, it would seem, simply compelled to reproduce herself in Charles. Otherwise, she will never be more than a hopeful monster. And this brings us to her involvement with Charles.

Throughout the Undercliff scenes, Sarah seems primarily to seek, as Grogan and Charles think, the relief of confession. In her own words she seeks understanding (118) and forgiveness (146) from Charles. While her desire for understanding seems understandable, the desire to be forgiven for something that she has not really done is harder to grasp. Apparently she is asking for forgiveness simply for being herself, for being so outside the realm of normality, which, intolerant as we humans typically are, must be construed as a sin. Charles, however, cannot see this. He says outright that he is hardly the one to dispense forgiveness, and yet he assures her that she "is forgiven" (147). But she responds with the implicit fear that besets all hopeful monsters: "And may be forgotten," she says. This statement, I would argue, is the key statement of Sarah's motivations. And we must assess its significance in light of the fact that she is not

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satisfied with his *saying* that he will not forget her. For he does this once Sarah has made plain her feelings for him, once they have said they will never see each other again, and once she has agreed to leave Lyme. "I shall never forget you," Charles says as they part for what he thinks is the last time (206). This will not do for Sarah. She continues until the repetition of her own story is complete, until she has reproduced herself as a type.

And a postmodern version of the evolution of consciousness helps us understand the *way* she reproduces herself in Charles. Where Sarah has experience without historical knowledge, Charles will undergo a transformation, an individual, self-historicizing experience, and so will have a kind of self-knowledge that Sarah never really has. He will lack only the philosophical vocabulary through which his kind of experience will become recognizable as a historical concept. Early in the novel, Charles is the stereotype of the complacent Victorian gentleman, but he does have a certain elusive sense of "malaise." Charles himself cannot understand this, we are told, because he lacks the twentieth-century vocabulary of "existentialist philosophy" (60). But of course the more he becomes knotted into Sarah's story, the more he comes to understand himself differently. The change in his understanding occurs in two most relevant ways. He will experience senses of fear and anxiety that the narrator will interpret for us more and more in the language of existentialism. At the same time, we will see Charles's own sense of what he is undergoing in terms of a change in his understanding of Darwinism. Though he does give up fossil collecting, he will not be, as Peter Conradi has described it, "[deserted] by evolution" and then saved by existentialism (75). There will not be a "metaphysical transition . . . from a Darwinian to a social and existentialist level of understanding" (Fawkner 81), nor will he be "rescued" from Darwinism by existentialism (Salami 125).

The idea of evolution cannot just somehow go away, but it can change. Charles's transformation will involve leaving behind only the anthropocentric, Victorian Darwin. Interestingly enough, Sarah lives in what was already a famous fossil-finding area, but educated as she is, she does not appear to know about fossils. She knows that Charles collects tests, but he has to explain to her what they are (114). So of the two threads—one a philosophy, the other a scientific theory—that eventually weave themselves into the fabric of the twentieth-century self, one (existentialism) is associated with Sarah only in the way I have described, while the second (Darwinism) seems out of her ken altogether. Both come together in Charles. His case makes it appear that the philosophy and the biological theory are mutually implicative: The existentialist self implies the (postmodern) Darwinian story of humankind, and the Darwinian story

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implies the existential self as the evolutionary subject.

In Sarah's confession scene in the Undercliff, Charles easily comprehends the hackneyed Victorian story of the young woman who follows after the dashing but false young man. But when Sarah describes her feelings rather than just her actions, she loses him: "this talk of freedom beyond the pale, of marrying shame, he found incomprehensible" (143). Later, when Charles goes back on his word to Grogan and walks out to see Sarah by the old barn (thus further committing himself to her), he experiences a moment of revelation in the forest, suddenly grasping "the universal parity of existence," the fact that nature has no built-in value scale. He realizes the falseness of the comforting, "pseudo-Linnaean" (191) version of evolution that he had known earlier in the novel, before meeting Sarah. This revelation about Darwinian truth comes in tandem with an existentialist sense of isolation and anxiety. Charles now feels that "the trees, the flowers, even the inanimate things around him were watching him" (192). Still, at this point he only apprehends a "deeper and stranger reality" with vague but "hostile implications" (192). At the end of the scene, as if being pulled along in spite of himself, he takes "the path formerly used by Sarah" (192).

We run into existentialism again just after the first "ending," the one imagined by Charles on the train back from London to Exeter. In this imaginary ending, he does not follow the path formerly used by Sarah but simply returns to Tina and a dull but comfortable future in which he becomes "one more ammonite caught in the vast movements of history" (262). Consequently, Sarah turns out to have been only a hopeful monster and nothing more. Not having brought Charles to repeat her experience, she has not managed to bring forth herself as a new type. In his fantasy, Charles has already begun to forget the real Sarah ("it was hardly Sarah he now thought of") and to remember her only as a symbol of his "extinct freedoms" (262). He "learns" to become an observer, set to watch himself learn how to be the proper husband to his proper wife, etc. The sense of detachment that has in fact already been his problem, now becomes the most he can hope for. And the artificial, shallow, self-deceptive side of the Victorians is preserved; nothing has really changed. But in spite of his imaginary finale, Charles finds himself unwillingly free to choose to see Sarah again after all. In confronting this choice, Charles "had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom—that is, the realization that one *is* free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror" (267). From the fact that the novel continues on past this realization, we can see that the kind of change under investigation here cannot really be learned

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or taught in any usual sense. It has to do with a kind of experience, and this is why Charles must literally repeat Sarah's story in order to be changed. For this reason the first ending in which Charles sees that "one learned to be what one is" will not do (264).

The path formerly used by Sarah leads Charles to Sarah herself in her room in Exeter. Whereas earlier Charles had been an "enigma" to himself with respect to Sarah (181), once he has been sexually intimate with her, he becomes "infinitely strange" to himself (277). This strangeness admitted, Sarah immediately rejects him with only the vaguest explanation: that she is not worthy of him. In fact, though, she does not know why she has done it. Her action is simply "not to be explained" (279). Having been brought into an ultimate intimacy and then rejected, Charles goes through his great existential realization in the church in Exeter. There, he sees that true freedom implies a kind of ongoing self-crucifixion, an ongoing requirement to make the choice to be authentically free. But unlike Sarah's awareness of all this, Charles's revelation comes distinctly in relation to a sense of historical change. He realizes that "his age" has been the "great hidden enemy" that has deceived him about his true self and further that the age operates as a machine: "without thought, without intention, without malice, because the deception was in its very nature" (285). Thus his conjunction with Sarah has caused him to step beyond his own time: He can now see that previously he "had become, while still alive, as if dead" (285). But in spite of this, he has not yet fully become what Sarah has always already been.

In his wanderings after Sarah has abandoned him, he sees what had been wrong with his revelation in the church: "When he had had his great vision of himself freed from his age, his ancestry and class and country, he had not realized how much the freedom was embodied in Sarah; in the assumption of a shared exile" (335). Now he begins to describe himself as Sarah had described herself earlier. He "was the outcast, the not like other men, the result of a decision few could have taken" (335). The difference, again, between his case and Sarah's is that he has *become* an outcast. But in any event, it would appear that Sarah has managed not to be forgotten. And yet until he remembers her as what he most wants but cannot possibly have, she will not be remembered in the right way. The full quality of her newness will not have succeeded in reproducing itself, and thus will not have succeeded in producing, precisely, the late twentieth century. Earlier on, the narrator brings out this paradox. What we know now more acutely than the Victorians, he says, is "that the desire to hold and the desire to enjoy are mutually destructive" (60). Sarah's life in London embodies this knowledge. In the end she has come to "treasure"

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loneliness. Marriage is perhaps the greatest institution of holding and enjoying among human beings. But Sarah does not want marriage, because the way that it holds would ruin the pleasure that it ostensibly seeks to guarantee. "I do not want to share my life," she says. "I wish to be what I am, not what a husband . . . must expect me to become in marriage" (353). To this point Charles has not yet grasped this, because there remains the possibility that everything was just a misunderstanding brought on by Sam's treachery. Another meeting must occur before he has fully experienced Sarah's story.

But before considering the final endings, we need to examine the way they are brought to us. Late in the novel a key character appears: the writer. We have seen that the postmodern version of Darwin can explain Sarah's enigmatic nature and her effect on Charles. But how does the idea of the postmodern Darwin come into play with respect to the writer? Natural selection disallows any supernatural causality, but nonetheless natural selection necessarily becomes a version of the prime mover or at least the prime movement, with chance and the environment being the unmotivated movers. As in, for instance, a religious cosmogony, natural selection attempts to tell the whole story, growing into what Daniel Dennett calls a "universal acid: it eats through just about every traditional concept, and leaves in its wake a revolutionized world-view, with most of the old landmarks still recognizable, but transformed in fundamental ways" (63). Fowles's novelist is just such a recognizable but transformed creature.

We read in the famous 13th chapter that it was a "convention universally accepted at the time of [the] story: that the novelist stands next to God" (80). The story told by this God with a capital "G" was of a kind with the anthropocentric Darwin, and conversely, the anthropocentric Darwin was of a kind with this God and its story. As we have seen above, to many Victorians the gradualist, progressive version of natural selection preserved a kind of divine place for humanity. The Victorian novel in its form did much the same, again not necessarily because the writers actually read Darwin. The ideas that Darwin put forth were part of a historical complex of thought, and so as Levine says, we find a "striking mutuality of assumptions" between the kind of story Darwin tells and the kind of story the great Victorian realists tell (8). Even in the late twentieth century, Fowles writes, the "novelist is still a god," though now with a small "g." What "has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing" (82). In fact "freedom" is the first principle now. The author does "not fully control" his creatures because a fully "planned world . . . is a dead world" (81). But on the other hand some sense of determinism is unavoidable: "not even the most aleatory

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avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely" (82). The novelist's difficulty is to avoid a deadening determinism in an inevitably planned world. To do so he must preserve the reality of chance. The writer had considered the option of stopping with the "open, the inconclusive ending": Charles would simply ride off to London in search of Sarah. But "the conventions of Victorian fiction . . . allow . . . no place" for such endings (317). So in order to remain true to his Victorian beginning, but to avoid fixing the ending in a conventional teleological manner, he gives two endings. And flips a coin to decide their order of appearance.

This clearly is not the Victorian novel's version of chance, which "is a dramatic expression of the value and ultimate order in nature," always "[suggesting] a designing hand that sets things right" (Levine 137). In the Victorian novel, everything will have necessarily brought about just the one ending. So in spite of the famous Victorian use of coincidence, a strong sense of determinism is hard to avoid. And it is the same kind of determinism that underwrites the teleological, Victorian Darwin. In contrast, Fowles's narrative is of a type with the model of natural selection found in recent Darwinian theory, particularly in Gould's model. With respect to the tendency of Darwinism to swing all the way in one of two polar directions, determinism or randomness, Gould refuses not only the either/or dichotomy but also a synthesis of the two opposites. "I strongly reject," he writes,

> any conceptual scheme that places our options on a line, and holds that the only alternative to a pair of extreme positions lies somewhere between them. More fruitful perspectives often require that we step off the line to a site outside the dichotomy. (51)

Gould steps off the polar-oppositional line by invoking contingency, which in his definition is a rather perfectly postmodern paradoxical concept. Contingency "is a thing unto itself, not the titration of determinism by randomness" (51). In standard postmodern fashion, it preserves both randomness and determinism in an unresolvable tension with each other (51). An outcome of his particular position is that our current evolutionary ending may be necessary but is *no more* plausible or necessary than any number of other possible endings. Gould argues that if we could start the history of life over, could somehow replay "life's tape," we would find that "any replay of the tape would lead evolution down a pathway radically different from the road actually taken" (51). No "finale can be specified at the start," he continues, "and none would ever occur a second time in the same way, because any pathway proceeds through thousands of

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improbable stages" (51). So again, Gould rejects any history that takes for granted the necessity of a given ending. But Gould hardly wants to put forth the idea "that evolution is senseless" (51) or purely random, which would not be a theory at all. The concept of contingency attempts to include chance without tumbling into the abyss of pure randomness. But of course Gould cannot reverse time's arrow and show us how the same beginning can generate a different ending. Fowles, however, does just this. We have one originating reality leading by chance to two different outcomes. Each outcome retrospectively determines what the nature of Sarah had actually been. And Fowles does this quite seriously. The narrator specifically admonishes that we must not think that either ending "is a less plausible ending" than the other (365). Thus, although my own reading has been drawing toward the final, existential ending, in fact I must agree with John Neary that it is inadequate to see either ending as the "*real* ending" (174). So the writer himself has been recast as the prime mover in the same way that the prime mover of natural selection has been recast in contemporary Darwinism.

And what of the two endings? In both cases Sarah has finally found a home in which she can "treasure" the kind of self she has always been (353). But in the first of the final endings, she turns out not to have been *even* a hopeful monster. In fact she is only the woman as lovable-enigma archetype who brings Charles fully into the Victorian norm, with God and the nuclear family intact. Instead of Darwin, existentialism, and the postmodern writer, we find that "it had all been in God's hands" from the beginning (God again with the capital) and that Sarah's actions have been "parables" (360). This is as if, in that other great Victorian novel, Estella had turned out all along only to be testing Pip. The positive but again shallow, rosy stereotype of the Victorians is preserved. Nothing fundamental has changed. All the thick weaving of existentialism and Darwinism has been only a threat to an otherwise traditional Victorian story. In the final image the baby cutely bangs her doll on her father's cheek, reminding him "that a thousand violins cloy very rapidly without percussion" (360). This ending, whatever else we may say about it, cloys in the same way.

In the last ending, though, the two threads are sewn tightly together. The last chapter opens with the quote from Martin Gardner's *The Ambidextrous Universe*, in which less than microscopic bits of matter, subatomic particles ("natural radiation"), bring about macroscopic change. And at the same time we meet the next incarnation of the narrator *in* the novel, who, we read, is "a very minor figure—as minimal, in fact, as a gamma-ray particle" (361). Fowles has brought us fully round to the

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Darwin of the 1960s. This writer takes out his watch and literally turns time back in order for the last ending to occur (362). Now, Sarah turns out to have been the new type, the type who is at home with contingency, uncertainty, and anxiety. Charles leaves the novel changed into a similar kind of being, finally possessing a "celibacy of heart as total as hers" (365), but with a historicized knowledge that she has not had. At the end he faces "the future made present," as if he has been "reborn, though with all his adult faculties and memories" (365) already in place.

What remains to consider is that since Sarah becomes more than a hopeful monster, this must mean that the environment was somehow *already* such that she could possibly succeed. What is the "environment" of other human minds such that we can make this kind of claim about Sarah? Many things may be said here, but with respect to *The French Lieutenant's Woman* what most matters is the fact that a human environment is constituted by consciousness and unconsciousness. Cultural representations always have their conscious aspects: that which a member of the culture actually thinks or says about a given representation. And they always have their unconscious aspects: that which, for instance, ideological analysis uncovers as the latent determinants of the representation, that which must be determining the conscious awareness even though the conscious awareness does not fully know it. Given this, we can see retrospectively that Sarah succeeds because in leading Charles along the trail of her own experience, she has acted, without herself having this conscious intention, as this kind of analyst. In becoming estranged from himself Charles sees that he has heretofore been blind to his own nature (290). This means that he had been a kind of internal outcast, displaced from an authentic sense of self before, only he had not quite known it. But of course, all this only comes to be the case *after* his experience of Sarah. By extension this would be true of the age as a whole, though again we could only know this retrospectively: Certain great Victorian thinkers—Arnold, Tennyson, Hardy—at least at times *now* appear to have been existentialists but without knowing it. And in just this sense Fowles has said of his novel that it shows "an existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible" (qtd. in Bradbury 140).

Like all pathways back to the past, Fowles's book must find the present already there. We ourselves must somehow already be "waiting" in the past, or else we have no explanation for how we could be who we think of ourselves as being right now. The difference in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as in the postmodern Darwin, is that we as historical kinds of selves appear by chance. And again, it is this that prevents this story of the evolution of the self from becoming another form of social Darwinism. In

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other words, a likely criticism of my explanation of Sarah might be that she appears as a necessary mutation on the way to the endpoint of the present in the same way that a biological mutation is a necessary mutation on the way to whatever endpoint we choose to discuss. Therefore, the existential self is as programmatically a part of humankind as is a given biological trait. This makes the existential self seem somehow right, somehow what had to be the case. It would follow that other historical types of self along the way have also been right and necessary, such as for instance the kind of self that underwrote imperialism. In fact it would seem to lead to the famous eighteenth-century conclusion that whatever is, is right. But the kind of history told by Fowles and postmodern versions of Darwin requires that no type, not *even* a biological type, is right or necessary in this way. In fact Fowles shows the emergence of a generic kind of self-consciousness in much the same way that Foucault shows the emergence of an episteme and that Kuhn shows the emergence of a scientific paradigm. As with so many postmodern concepts, the linearity of time no longer holds in any straightforward sense, and so judgments of historical necessity become difficult to make. As even Dennett stresses, retrospectivity "is a point about the objective property" of being a new evolutionary event: it is not just an aspect of "our epistemic limitations" (96). It is only true *now* that the appearance of a self such as Sarah must have been necessary: It was not necessary at the time. The question of the rightness of an event in this context becomes even more difficult. How, given my interpretation, can we describe the existential self as an "improvement" or as "progress"? What would it be progress toward? It may be movement onward, but "toward" always implies a telos, and this idea of a telos we have seen to be an anthropocentric illusion. The most we can say is that since a type succeeded, then it must have been right enough for that environment at that time. But if we include an awareness of chance, then, really, we can only say that the one actuality must have been the lucky winner from some finite but indeterminate realm of possibilities.

Inevitably, our Darwin, like the Victorian Darwin, both upsets and consoles. The Victorian Darwin meant the crushing loss of any supernatural human preeminence, but the comforting discovery of a kind of natural preeminence. With the contemporary Darwin, we lose any satisfactory version of even a natural preeminence. Consequently, the Victorian Darwin now seems "pre-lapsarian" (Conradi 60), and so we look back nostalgically upon Charles (before Sarah) as the quaintly naive believer in the "immensely reassuring orderliness in existence" that Darwin supposedly gave in exchange for making us "only" animals (Fowles 45).

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Contemporary evolutionists feel this loss and try to salvage a positive view of human existence from the anthropocentric wreckage. The rescue they offer typically involves a redefinition of our uniqueness and some sense of hope. According to Gould, who sounds distinctly existentialist about this, though we are ultimately random events in time, nonetheless we are "the offspring of history, and must establish our own paths in this most diverse and interesting of conceivable universes—one indifferent to our suffering, and therefore offering us maximal freedom to thrive, or to fail, in our own chosen way" (323). Dennett ends his book asking whether, after the "universal solvent" of Darwinian theory has done its job, there remains "something sacred? Yes, say I with Nietzsche. I could not pray to it, but I can stand in affirmation of its magnificence. This world is sacred. . . . What remains is more than enough to build on" (520–21). Charles has found, in the same paradoxical way as both our theorists, "an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness on which to build" a more authentic existence (366). In all three cases our uniqueness remains, but it looks rather monstrous in relation to the supernatural or anthropocentric explanations about ourselves that we most favor. And only a very uncertain hope may be derived from this uniqueness. Sounds familiar. The conclusion, it appears, must be that our era itself is the time of the hopeful monster.

NOTES

[1] For other discussions of Darwinism in the novel see Conradi 75, Tarbox 79–80, Huffaker ch. 4, Fawkner ch. 5–6, Salami 124–25, Wolfe ch. 4.

[2] Both Dawkins and Dennett argue against Gould's claims (Dawkins ch. 9, Dennett ch. 10). Interestingly enough, while Gould attributes the Darwinism of Dawkins and Dennett to anthropocentrism, Dennett in his turn says much the same of Gould. Dennett admits chance, but he, like Dawkins, still finds a gradual process of change necessary to any legitimately scientific idea of natural selection. Given this, he defines Gould's punctuated equilibrium as a kind of "skyhook," a more or less magical means of getting around Darwinian necessities. Both sides of course accuse each other of misapprehending what the other has in fact said.

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Silencing Stephen: Colonial Pathologies in Victorian Dublin

Tracey Teets Schwarze

James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus is an insatiable reader of the cultural texts that comprise turn-of-the-century Dublin. Critics such as R. B. Kershner rightly have noted the ways in which the Stephen of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* romantically reenacts Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo* and Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons* in order to escape the ever-downward spiral of life in the Dedalus household,[1] but I believe the themes of these works have even broader implications in the political development of the young artist. They also reflect and solidify the sense of betrayal that Stephen comes to recognize as a pivotal motif in Irish colonial politics. Both works depict estranged lovers separated by treachery, but this important theme is also encoded with the signifiers of *self*-betrayal. The protagonists of these stories are deceived not from without, but from within: Edmond Dantes and Claude Melnotte are betrayed by ill-chosen friends, and to a lesser degree, by the women they love. The implications of this self-deception for both Stephen Dedalus and colonial Ireland become clear as we follow Stephen's reading of the Irish political scene and note his inescapable conclusion: It is not England that is Ireland's chief betrayer; it is Ireland itself.

Vincent J. Cheng and Enda Duffy recently have argued forcefully for Joyce's position as a subaltern writer concerned with representing the divisive and devastating effects of colonial oppression in Ireland. Both Cheng and Duffy suggest Joyce depicts an Ireland that, in its attempts to throw off the mantle of British imperialism, devises a nationalism that mimics the very structures of racism, ethnocentrism, and violence that Britannia perpetuated in order to subdue indigenous populations across the empire. I, too, view Joyce as a highly politicized, colonial figure writing against canonical and political hegemony. While I agree that Joyce certainly sees British im-

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perialism as a fundamental cause of Irish political chaos in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods ("Can the back of a slave forget the rod?" Joyce asks [*Critical Writings* 168]), I would also assert that Joyce's primary purpose in depicting this discord is not so much to condemn British mistreatment of Ireland as it is to expose and deride Ireland's oppression of its own sons and daughters as it attempts the impossible task of "purifying" or "de-anglicizing" Irish culture. Robert Spoo has claimed that *Ulysses* itself and its protagonists repudiate the "totalizing" impulse of conventional historiography as simplistic and unsatisfactory; that is, Joyce's novel rejects the depiction of "history" as a teleological, inexorable progression "towards *one* great goal" (*Ulysses* 2.381, my emphasis). Spoo also contends that Joyce "attacked Irish nationalism and its doctrine of racial purity" for the same reasons (47).[2] I agree with this assessment of Joyce's position, but central to my argument is the contention that late nineteenth-century Irish nationalism—like the problematic notion of Irish "history"—cannot be discussed as a monolithic entity; *nationalisms* seems to me a more accurate term than the singular form to describe the multiplicity of revolutionary movements in turn-of-the-century Ireland. These nationalisms divided colonial Ireland and presented a threat to Irish nation-ness as dangerously monolithic and oppressive as any imperialistic hegemony.[3] As Stephen Dedalus moves through the politically charged narratives of *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, his encounters with the evolving Irish nation—as well as his exclusion from its forms at every turn—reveal Joyce's implicit condemnation of these Irishmen (and women) who have recreated the very political and cultural constructs that they would overthrow.

It is a repetitiously bloody and complex colonial heritage that Stephen Dedalus must decode, a national experience characterized by six centuries of British occupation and Irish revolt. Beginning in 1171 with Henry II's arrival on Irish soil and continuing until the 1922 partition of the island into Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, Irish history records the gamut of colonial oppression aimed at expediting the absorption of the "foreign" culture and reaping the economic harvests of colonization. The impact of colonization on the subaltern identity—as well as the extraordinarily problematic task of resurrecting or recreating the subsumed culture—has been observed by a host of postcolonial critics, most notably Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak. Both Fanon and Spivak have marked the inherent impossibility that underlies cultural revival movements that would return "national" culture to a precolonized state. Fanon explains the inseparability of colonial history from the rest of a nation's heritage:

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> At the very moment when the native intellectual is anxiously trying to create a cultural work he fails to realise that he is utilising techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. . . . The artist who has decided to illustrate the truths of the nation turns paradoxically towards the past and away from actual events. . . . But the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities. (180–81)

Joyce himself similarly observed that the modern nation's bloodlines are inextricable from centuries of invasion and conquest; as he put it, "To exclude from the present nation all who are descended from foreign families would be impossible" (*Critical Writings* 162). Spivak likewise problematizes the nationalist project; she notes that the subaltern culture never can be accurately recorded because neither the peasants themselves nor those who are most likely to transcribe their stories—members of the "counter-insurgency" or the nationalist "elite"—are immune from the influence of the Anglo-Saxon Other (203). Early in *Ulysses*, Joyce will demonstrate just this difficulty as Haines, Mulligan, and Stephen greet the old Irish woman who delivers their morning milk. Cheng has noted Haines's problematic pose as an Englishman engaged in Irish ethnography (and suggests his work will perpetuate the racial/racist stereotypes of the islanders pervasive at the turn of the century) as well as Mulligan's hopeful pimping of "Irishness" for the project. The Buck's first offering is an impressive one: colorful tales of the countryside, an "authentic" peasant woman, and Dedalus, the morose Irish poet (Cheng 156). Intriguingly, Duffy has also proposed that the old woman may not be as dispossessed of her language as most readers of Joyce initially assume; Duffy suggests she may be feigning ignorance in order to dupe—and resist—those who would collect her as some sort of national specimen (48). What becomes most clear to me in this scene, however, is Joyce's insistence on the impossibility of representing/recovering/purifying subalternity outside anglicized space. Multiple possibilities for transcribing the subaltern identity are rendered here, but all are irretrievably tainted by British influence: Haines, the only character actively engaged in the project, is an Englishman; Mulligan, a mercenary version of Spivak's nationalist "elite," pursues English sovereigns as he trades on "Irishness." Neither Stephen Dedalus nor the milkwoman are any less contaminated: Stephen's embittered, anti-imperialist eruptions in this episode suggest an evolving identity as Spivak's "counter-insurgent"; the milkwoman, whether or not she speaks Gaelic, certainly does speak English, and, as Stephen notes, seems infatuated with both Haines and Mulligan, "her conqueror and her gay betrayer" (*Ulysses* 1.405).

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A variety of isolationist, nationalist-revivalist movements emerged in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland to attempt the purgation of Saxon influence and return Irish culture to its "virgin" state; such movements gained full momentum in the late Victorian period with the formation of such organizations as the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language (1876), the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884), the National Literary Society (1892), the Gaelic League (1893), and the Irish Literary Theatre (1899). The Gaelic Revival, led by Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill, latched onto a linguistic solution to Ireland's internal divisiveness; Hyde choose Gaelic, rather than Catholicism, as a signifier of "Irishness," in hopes of attracting both Protestants and Catholics to his movement (Cairns and Richards 65). William Butler Yeats and George W. Russell (who would part ways themselves), on the other hand, looked to rebuild Ireland's spiritual essence through a distinctive Irish literature—written in English. The literary movement took issue with Hyde's contention that reviving Gaelic was the only way to "de-anglicize" Ireland; Yeats replied to Hyde in an 1892 letter to *United Ireland*:

> Can we not build up a national tradition, a national literature, which shall be none the less Irish in spirit from being English in language? Can we not keep the continuity of the nation's life . . . by translating or retelling in English, which shall have an indefinable Irish quality of rythm [sic] and style, all that is best of the ancient literature? (Rpt. in Frayne 255)

As Stephen Dedalus wanders through the din of competing discourses that make up the modern Irish nation, he helps Joyce to reveal that those who would promote hegemony and insularity—whether the forms be British or Irish—would destroy the very nation they would create.

The signifiers of political self-betrayal intrude upon the consciousness of *Portrait*'s Stephen from the novel's first page, which records his earliest memories—hearing the Baby Tuckoo story, wetting the bed, and dancing the sailor's hornpipe. Stephen here also observes that "Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell" (*Portrait* 7). It is the earliest text of colonial impact that Stephen tries to read; it records the temporary unity of nationalist factions—including Davitt's Fenian Irish National Land League and the Catholic Church—under Parnell's leadership. With Parnell's political demise in 1890 and his death in 1891, however, came the renewal of virulent factionalism. A few pages later, Dante has "ripped the green velvet back off the brush that was for Parnell . . . and . . . told him that Parnell was a bad man," and Stephen wonders "which was

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right, to be for the green or for the maroon" (*Portrait* 16). Before his terror-stricken eyes, Christmas dinner is transformed into a metaphoric civil war, each side accusing the other of deception, treachery, and betrayal: John Casey and Simon Dedalus violently deride the Catholic priests and the "priests' pawns" who denounced Parnell because of his liaison with Kitty O'Shea; just as vehemently, Dante Riordan defends the priests' action as a vindication of "God and morality and religion" (*Portrait* 38). Stephen momentarily recalls happier days when both sides united against British imperialism:

> he was for Ireland and Parnell and so was father; and so was Dante too for one night at the band on the esplanade she had hit a gentleman on the head with her umbrella because he had taken off his hat when the band played "God Save the Queen" at the end.
> (*Portrait* 37)

But with Parnell's fall, the union he had forged fractured; in the Dedalus dining room, faces darken in anger, voices quiver with rage, and fists crash onto the table. That this is Christmas dinner, that time of year when "goodwill among men" mythically pervades, intensifies the violence and causes the scene to reverberate with irony. Stephen's confusion over the argument—"Who was right then?" (*Portrait* 35)—underscores the prismatic nature of nationalist discourse as it scatters altered pieces of ideology among various political factions.

The fragmented discourse that Stephen endeavors to decode is often underwritten by a gendered subtext that further confuses him. In *Stephen Hero,* Madden articulates one of the spiritual qualities that his nationalist movement has claimed as integral to its Irishness, telling Stephen: "The Irish are noted for at least one virtue all the world over. . . . they are chaste" (*Stephen Hero* 55).[4] Thus hard-line, conservative Catholic outrage over Parnell's and O'Shea's adultery has its basis not only in the Ten Commandments, but also in the perceived betrayal of Irish national character. Tellingly, the Christmas dinner scene also seems to be as much about O'Shea and her subversion of the feminine responsibility in preserving culture as it is about Parnell; the story Casey relates about the old woman who taunted him with Parnellite slurs turns on her final vilification of O'Shea in sexualized terms: "I let her bawl away, to her heart's content, Kitty O'Shea and all the rest of it till at last she called that lady a name that I won't sully this Christmas board nor your ears . . . nor my own lips by repeating" (*Portrait* 36).

Only vaguely perceiving the gendered subtext of the political argument, Stephen unwittingly makes the connection that remains unspoken at this table between sexual scandal and Parnell's Protestantism. Casey defends

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himself against Mrs. Riordan's accusations that he is a "renegade catholic," for, although he rejects chastity as a signifier of "Irishness," he does not (initially) seem to abjure the movement of religion into the same domain. When Dante intimates that Casey is among "the blackest protestant[s] in the land," he retaliates, his face flushing: "I am no protestant, I tell you again" (*Portrait* 35). Stephen's immediate evocation of his Protestant friend, Eileen, is clearly connected to Dante's accusation and Casey's denial, but Stephen's reflection is curiously sexualized:

> She [Dante] did not like him to play with Eileen because Eileen was a protestant and when she was young she knew children that used to play with protestants and the protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin. Tower of Ivory, they used to say, House of Gold! How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold? (*Portrait* 35)

The intimations here are two-fold: first and most obviously, Irish Protestants, in Mrs. Riordan's opinion, are skeptical of any claim for a miraculous virgin birth, and thus are bereft of any reverence for the Catholic icon's sanctity. The second suggestion is more complex and is tied to the Protestant demotion of the Virgin to the status of "a woman." Their refusal to accept these metaphorical descriptions of purity and value, "ivory" and "gold," as signifiers for womanhood implies that Protestants are sexually "loose"—a proposition demonstrated for many Irish Catholics by the Parnell–O'Shea scandal. Protestants by extension of this argument would not be "truly" Irish because they do not possess the chastity that is integral to the definition of Irish national character propounded by Madden in *Stephen Hero* and by Dante here.

Laura Doyle has elucidated the complex interconnectedness of Irish nationalism to both Irish Catholicism and the female virgin. Doyle writes: "The virgin woman, including as embodied in the Catholic Virgin mother Mary, is the figure of national purity—uninfected by an invasive, alien sexuality. She embodies the fantasy of an unadulterated, uncolonized history, the pure birth of a nation" (3). If the Irish virgin collapses into the Catholic Virgin, as Doyle suggests, then O'Shea's adultery is not only traitorous, it is also blasphemous. I would also point out, however, that Irish Catholicism—as well as Madden's definition of Irish character—also inscribes a *male* virgin: Catholicism reveres as chaste both its Christ and its priests. Again, the two ideologies collapse onto one another. Parnell in this scene is characterized by both sides as a Christ-like figure: In Dante's assessment, Parnell was suited to lead so long as he remained—like Christ—sexually pure and without sin. Once he became a "public sinner," however, Parnell could no longer

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enact the role of Ireland's savior. Casey and Simon Dedalus see in Parnell the martyred Christ, hated by the Pharisees of his own day; they interpret the priests' denunciation of the Irish leader as Judas-like treachery (In *Ulysses*, Mr. Power will even suggest that like Christ, Parnell will be resurrected, "that one day he will come again" [*Ulysses* 6.923–24]). Like O'Shea, Parnell has betrayed not only Ireland's vision of itself as "virgin" and "pure," but he also has blasphemed its ideal of an immaculate God. Parnell's adultery thus fuses treason with desecration, an unforgivable combination of sins that fans the heat of the quarrel at the Dedalus table.

Like his family relationships, Stephen's early school experiences are also encoded with signifiers of colonial self-deception and destruction. Partha Chatterjee has noted that the aim of nationalist movements is not to *reject* the principles of modern government expounded by their colonizers, but to *require* the just application of these principles (74). Edward Said, however, takes a more problematic view of native mimicry of colonial hierarchical structures. He argues:

> Nationalism was often led by lawyers, doctors, and writers who were partly formed and to some degree produced by the colonial power. The national bourgeoises . . . in effect tended to replace the colonial force with a new class-based and ultimately exploitative one, which replicated the old colonial structures in new terms. (223)

The young Stephen first treads the halls of academia at the prestigious Clongowes Wood College, a school in which academic teams are dubbed "Lancaster" and "York" and in which Catholic Ireland's mimicry of British forms seems already well established. While the class consciousness evident among the Irish Catholic elite may not have been representative of attitudes at the less fashionable Belvedere College (which Stephen attends after his withdrawal from Clongowes, a move precipitated by his father's financial trouble [*Portrait* 64]), the influence of his first alma mater on his evolving sense of Ireland's oppressive political structures is undeniable. Class hierarchies are in play among even the schoolyard boys at Clongowes; as soon as he arrives, Stephen's schoolmates try to discern his proper place in their order. His last name, neither Saxon nor Gaelic, defies classification, but Nasty Roche presses undaunted for some indication of Stephen's social status: "*What* is your father?" Roche wants to know. When Stephen replies, evasively, "A gentleman," Roche pushes further: "Is he a magistrate?" (*Portrait* 9). This discussion of profession is encoded with the signifiers of Ireland's colonial status; magistrates, of course, were Irish civil servants who administered British law in the colony. Drawing their power from this association with the British Crown, these young practitioners of playground politics

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evince Said's point that native populations frequently model exploitative class structures on those they have observed in their conquerors. Stephen feels acutely his lack of position in this order; his father has already apologized that "he was not a magistrate like the other boys' fathers" (*Portrait* 26), but Stephen fantasizes that he might yet outrank the magistrates' sons. A promotion for Simon figures prominently in his son's dreams of the perfect Christmas vacation: "Welcome home, Stephen! Noises of welcome. . . . His father was a marshal now; higher than a magistrate" (*Portrait* 20).

Stephen's need for an exalted place in the schoolyard hierarchy is a direct result of the oppression he experiences there. In a native appropriation of the colonial scene in which colonizers subdue indigenous populations by imposing behavioral patterns for the natives to emulate, the Irish Catholic Wells establishes himself as Stephen's superior. This enactment of Said's theory of nativistic self-oppression becomes unmistakable as the episode progresses. Already outranking Stephen as a magistrate's son, Wells is also positioned in the elevated "third of grammar" and owns a "seasoned hacking chestnut," significantly described by Stephen (and presumably by Wells) as "the conqueror of forty" (*Portrait* 14). The question Wells poses to Stephen—"Tell us Dedalus, do you kiss your mother before you go to bed?" unmasks Stephen's failure to assimilate into the new hierarchy. Stephen's blushing confusion as he attempts to discover the "right" answer to the question marks the imminent failure of colonial mimesis that Homi Bhabha has argued for in "Of Mimicry and Man." Stephen tries in this scene to imitate the response he believes his tormentors require to prove he is one of them, but instead produces what Bhabha calls "a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (126); Stephen's response reveals nothing so much as his own estrangement from his countrymen's discourse and solidifies their positions over him.

As it did in the Christmas dinner episode, the gendering of this scene further contributes to its political implications. If, as Doyle and other theorists have noted,[5] the female figure in Irish literature is often an encoded representation of the struggles against colonial oppressions, then the power of Wells's question may derive from its appropriation of the female figure. Janet Grayson has argued that Wells's question is a politicized one—do you submit to Ireland and her claims on you? Grayson suggests that Stephen's change of affirmation to negation foreshadows his later "non-serviam"; her analysis overlooks the fact that Stephen's "I do not" is more likely to be not a statement of convictions, but rather an attempt by an unhappy child to silence his tormentors by guessing the "right" answer to their trick question. But Wells's question and the reading of the female figure is a legitimate one; Stephen will later in *Portrait* refuse his mother's request that he

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make his Easter duty, and she becomes a progressively clearer representation of Ireland and its staunch Catholicism.[6] For now, however, Stephen faces for the first time a question for which there is no "right" answer; the ambiguity of right and wrong among political texts is, of course, repeated at Christmas dinner.

These schoolyard scenes, then, become miniaturized, nativistic appropriations of the conquest narrative, where British dominion is replaced by an Irish Catholic rule that employs the forms of colonial subjugation as it subdues fellow Irishmen. As he grows older, Stephen becomes an increasingly more sophisticated reader of the self-oppression inherent in Victorian Dublin's colonial discourses. In a heated exchange with Davin, Stephen explodes against one nationalist faction, the Gaelic Leaguers:

> No honorable and sincere man . . . has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I'd see you damned first. . . . (*Portrait* 203)

Just as passionately, however, Stephen despises the "patricians of Ireland," who have sold out their country's aspirations to line their own pockets. He wonders how he "could hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own?" (*Portrait* 238). Stephen's decision to chart a course between these betrayers of Ireland is the force behind the determined quest with which he ends *Portrait*, to "forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (253). Stephen's is *not* the nationalist project that would create a unified Irish character; he realizes, along with Joyce, that nation-ness is no blank space awaiting the imposition of homogeneous language, literature, and custom; it is, rather, as Bhabha has argued, a contentious, heterogeneous mixture of ideas and cultures ("DissemiNation" 307). Stephen's vow is to create a "conscience" for the Irish people, a sense of moral responsibility, a capacity to divine the damage their insular political agendas have inflicted on their country. Connected to this conscience is "consciousness"—a newly awakened awareness of the multiple variations of an Irish character that has touched other cultures and has been touched by them. Stephen's project, then, parallels Joyce's own, to hold up to Irish political factionalism a "nicely polished looking-glass" that would reveal its own short-sightedness.

Just as it is impossible for a colonized nation to "purify" itself, to recover or return to a culture unaffected by colonization, so also it is impossible for language to remain unaffected by cross-culturization. While it is

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true, as Bhabha contends in "The Other Question," that "the imposition of a foreign tongue" displaces native speech and becomes a means of ideological control that "differentiates the gentleman from the native, culture from civilization" (152), it is also true that the colonizer's language is likewise affected by its contact with other cultures. In the later scenes of *Portrait*, Joyce represents the two-edged impact of colonization on language and culture, as well as the impossibility of asserting either cultural or linguistic "purity" in the modern nation.

As a young university student conversing with his British dean of studies, Stephen perceives the striking dissonance in their respective relationships to the same tongue:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (*Portrait* 189)

Unlike his confusing encounter with Wells, Stephen begins here to be a perceptive reader of the ulterior narrative of empire. Later, the young man realizes he has acquiesced once again to what Said has called the "absolute hierarchical distinction . . . between the ruler and the ruled" (228), and records his anger in his journal:

> That tundish has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? Damn him one way or the other! (*Portrait* 251)

Stephen's disaffection in this scene functions not merely to represent the colonial subject's dispossession from the colonizer's language as Said and others have suggested; Joyce also problematizes and inverts this scene to convey the impact of cultural assimilation on the colonizer. When one culture endeavors to absorb another, the native does not disappear; instead both cultures work subtle transformations on one another to create a new form. Both parties are thus forever, irremediably, affected by mutual contact. As Said has pointed out, "Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic" (xxv). On one level, Joyce represents this influence in the person of a British dean who has, in effect, "gone native." This Englishman's conversion is certainly less

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dramatic than Kurtz's transformation in *Heart of Darkness*, but as an English convert to Catholicism's priesthood, the dean of studies has nonetheless betrayed his nation's "civilizing mission" by returning to the "primitive" religion.

Stephen perceives the resultant alienation from both Englishmen and Irishmen that "this halfbrother of the clergy" (*Portrait* 190), this "poor Englishman in Ireland" (*Portrait* 189) experiences, but as he fixates on the dean's linguistic snub, Stephen fails to notice that the priest shares his dissociation from the Saxon tongue. Stephen's contention that *tundish* is an English word is correct as far as it goes; in fact, *tundish* is still identified in Webster's *New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* as "British Dialect." However, Stephen is not thorough enough in his reading of etymologies. The *Oxford English Dictionary* additionally recognizes *tundish* as a combination form of *tun* and *dish*, words encoded with decidedly more complex origins. Variations of *tun*, meaning a cask or barrel designed to hold spirits, can be traced through a variety of languages, including Old and Middle English, but also—interestingly—to Middle Irish, Irish, and Gaelic. The *OED* concludes: "Origin uncertain; apparently not originally Latin or Romanic." This blurring of etymology results in the disaffection and foreignness that unsettle both Stephen and his dean in this scene and reveals the multiple layers of colonial impact: the Englishman fails to recognize the Englishness of the word; the Irishman does not apprehend its Gaelic origins. Thus this English language, already a hybrid tongue, may not be comfortably claimed—or disowned—by either man. By revealing language's predilection for absorbing, evolving, and finally "returning not the same" (*Ulysses* 13.1103–4), Joyce demonstrates that the cultural text is an extraordinarily complex and dynamic phenomenon, one incapable of being harnessed by any singular political ideology.

Throughout the first few episodes of *Ulysses*, Stephen continues to read the signs of Ireland's self-betrayal, and tentatively begins to challenge the conscience of cultural essentialism. Stephen's encounter with Garrett Deasy in the "Nestor" episode is clearly related to his run-in with Wells on the schoolyard at Clongowes; both scenes exhibit the "pathologies of power" Said has identified in colonized cultures (223). Spoo has carefully outlined Joyce's admitted use of history as the episode's structural trope: "Nestor" opens with Stephen's listless attempts to teach ancient history to the equally disengaged Dalkey boys, and is punctuated with his Blakean meditations on the fictive nature of historical narrative and its implicit subjectivity. According to Spoo, however, Stephen "halts short of asserting that the events of history are themselves fables, mere products of memorial selection and confection." Instead, he ponders the often imperceptible line between "fact . . .

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and fabulation" (93). The lines Stephen recollects from Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* serve as a useful epigram for framing Deasy's paradoxical rendition of history; at times parts of his tale are indeed "fabled by the daughters of memory," but at others, "it was in some way not as memory fabled it" (*Ulysses* 2.7–8). Whereas Catholic Wells and the other magistrates' sons appropriate an English class structure in order to subdue Stephen, Deasy, a Protestant unionist, appropriates Irish history to vindicate his British sympathies and bend Stephen to his will. Joyce juxtaposes Deasy's rewriting of Anglo-Protestant history in Ireland—with its unabashed elision of Catholic persecution—with Stephen's decidedly more bloody recollections of Catholics massacred at Irish Protestant or British hands at Armagh and Wexford, and the economic pillage of Catholic landowners. Although Stephen is reluctant to contradict Deasy openly (the watchful eye of "Albert Edward, prince of Wales" [*Ulysses* 2.266–7] hangs over the mantelpiece and his gold is in Stephen's pocket), Stephen here makes his first attempt to awaken the Irish conscience. Stephen mounts a challenge—a rather tentative, nervous challenge, but a challenge nonetheless—to Deasy's sanitized appropriation of Irish colonial history, calling it "a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (*Ulysses* 2.377).[7] In distinctly Tennysonian tones that recall the "glorious" British histories written by Thomas Babington Macaulay and other imperialists, Deasy justifies British colonial designs as manifest destiny, ordained by God; Stephen asserts the uncomfortable perspective of one positioned on the nightmarish receiving end of these conquests. That Stephen is quitting his job here is as significant as his refusal in *Portrait* to turn over his snuffbox to Wells; however, both gestures of rebellion are rendered ineffectual in the face of powerful political discourses that intend to silence all dissenting voices.

Stephen's reading of the tropes of nativistic oppression and his recognition of their hegemonic subtexts matures steadily throughout both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, culminating in "Scylla and Charybdis," where Stephen makes his boldest attempt to awaken the conscience of Ireland by forcing it to recognize the narrowness of its own definitions of "Irishness." Having experienced the despotism of fellow Catholics at Clongowes and the sting of exploitation by a Protestant unionist in "Nestor," Stephen in this episode undergoes trial by a third representative of the "pathologies of power"—the members of the Irish Literary Revival.[8] Predicated on the need to forge the nation's unified spiritual essence through literature, the Revival was, in Stephen's eyes, yet another attempt to rewrite Irish political history by exclusion and elision. Stephen's objection to the Revival is not about its desire to promote an Irish literature in English, but instead involves other restrictions that the movement imposed on the freedom of its artists. In spite

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of its initial claims to transcend political factionalism, the Revival adopted an increasingly ideological agenda, a shift condemned by Yeats and supported by Russell, who was becoming increasingly leftist in his sympathies. When nationalists took offense at the unflattering depictions of the Irish peasantry in Yeats's 1903 production of Synge's *In the Shadow of the Glen*, Yeats publicly chastised the preference of these revivalists for rhetoric over art, writing:

> A community that is opinion-ridden, even when those opinions are in themselves noble, is likely to put its creative minds into some sort of prison. If creative minds preoccupy themselves with incidents from the political history of Ireland, so much the better, but we must not enforce them to select those incidents. . . . Above all, we must not say that certain incidents which have been a part of literature in all other lands are forbidden to us. It may be our duty . . . to bring new kinds of subjects into the theatre, but it cannot be our duty to make the bounds of drama narrower. . . . Literature must take the responsibility of its power, and keep all its freedom. . . .
>
> ("An Irish National Theatre" 389–90)

For his pains, Yeats was accused of withdrawing into aestheticism; John Eglinton later charged him with omitting "all moral seriousness" from his faction of the revivalist movement (9).[9] Yeats himself noted the evolving differences between himself and Russell: "I am nothing but an artist," wrote Yeats to AE, "and my life is *written* in words. You are the other side of the penny, for you are admirably careful in *speech*, having set life before art, too much before it, I think, for one who is, in spite of himself perhaps, an artist" (qtd. in Rodgers 197).

Significantly, Yeats is absent from the gathering in "Scylla and Charybdis"; Stephen confronts not Yeats's literary revival but Russell's. Joyce is clear about the distinction: Russell appears in the episode as a peasant-glorifying populist. Yeats, by contrast, is recognized as the patron of art, not ideology (we hear he has admired Padraic Colum's line, "As in wild earth a Grecian vase" [*Ulysses* 9.304–5])[10] and it is Yeats's position that Stephen defends: Real literature must not be ideology's handmaiden. Here Stephen makes his own most pointed attempt to accomplish *Portrait*'s mission, reaching and defining Ireland's conscience. This is the most animated Stephen we have seen—or will see—in *Ulysses*. He "rudely" (*Ulysses* 9.228) and "boldly" (*Ulysses* 9.670) challenges his listeners with "tingling energy" (*Ulysses* 9.147), cheers himself on and holds at bay the "Nestor" doubt that feared a "back kick" from history. Now he holds at bay those anxieties: "What the hell are you driving at?" asks the voice of self-doubt. "I know. Shut up. Blast you. I have reasons" (*Ulysses* 9.846–47). Stephen brings all his intellectual

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weapons to bear against this movement which would create a literature that values politics before all else, endeavoring to make its representatives—Russell, Eglinton, Best, Lyster—acknowledge the damage to real art caused by their exclusivity and insularity. Stephen's primary tactic is a re-vision of Shakespeare—not to reject him as a literary model, but to expose the inconsistencies between Anglo-Ireland's rhetoric and its valorization of the English bard. Stephen makes three points about the playwright that are completely antithetical to the goals of the Irish Revival: first, that Shakespeare glorified not the peasantry, but the elite classes to which he himself belonged; second, that he represented in his art not the virtue of the English race but its corrupted chastity, which he had experienced first hand (as both cuckold and adulterer); and third, that he promoted a politicized agenda that propelled England's imperialist aims. In the following passage, Stephen drives home his first two points:

> Twenty years he lived in London and, during part of that time, he drew a salary equal to that of the lord chancellor of Ireland. His life was rich. His art, more than the art of feudalism, . . . is the art of surfeit. . . . Twenty years he dallied there between conjugal love and its chaste delights and scortatory love and its foul pleasures. You know Manningham's story of the burgher's wife who bade Dick Burbage to her bed after she had seen him in Richard III and how Shakespeare, overhearing, . . . took the cow by the horns and, when Burbage came knocking the gate, answered from the capon's blankets: *William the conqueror came before Richard III.* (*Ulysses* 9.623–32)

Stephen illustrates his third point, the lynchpin of his theory, through his historicized reading of Shakespeare as a jingoist whose work stoked the fires of British imperialism. Stephen twice connects the bard to the Anglo–Boer War (1899–1902), Britain's effort most contemporary to *Ulysses* to expand its empire. Stephen accuses Shakespeare's histories of "sail[ing] full-bellied on a tide of Mafeking enthusiasm" (*Ulysses* 9.753–4), and equates the Norwegian conquest of the Danes in Shakespeare with the British subjugation of the Dutch Boers: "*Khaki* Hamlets don't hesitate to shoot," he tells his audience (*Ulysses* 9.133–5, my emphasis). Stephen's choice of metaphor is particularly inflammatory given his audience of Dublin nationalists; as John Hutchinson notes, "The war generated a wave of racial-Imperialist fervor in Britain, [and] produced a revulsion among Irish intellectuals sympathetic to the cause of the small Boer nation" (144). The point of all this posturing, of course, is to make these worshippers of England's most acclaimed dramatist recognize that their own literary standards would have silenced him. The parallels to Stephen's own exclusion from the revival are clear; that he does not believe his own theory is entirely consistent with his

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argument. What Stephen tries to get his audience to admit is that no restrictions—whether moral, religious, political, or linguistic—should be placed on the artist as he attempts to record the life of his nation. Such freedom does not preclude the artist from rendering ideologically charged or even tendentious subjects, but his primary mission is to represent life as he sees it, unencumbered by any other "purpose." Stephen concludes Shakespeare's genius flourished precisely because he was not beholden to any particular dogma; instead, "*All* events brought grist to his mill" (*Ulysses* 9.748, my emphasis).

What begins as Stephen's most engaged campaign to reach the Irish conscience turns into his most crushing defeat. Russell walks out before he is half-finished; his remaining listeners begin to associate him with Oscar Wilde, the Irish-born satirist who turned his looking-glass on English society with disastrous personal consequences. Richard Best's empty-headed enthusiasm for both Wilde and Stephen serves to cheapen each, and Stephen chafes: "Tame essence of Wilde" (*Ulysses* 9.531–2). What Stephen rejects here is the superficial understanding these revivalists have for what Wilde really represents, both to him and to Ireland. As Margot Norris has pointed out, Stephen conceives of Wilde as a symbol of colonial oppression (63); he has refashioned Wilde's "Decay of Lying" aphorism into the "cracked looking-glass of a *servant*," emphasizing not the rebellious sarcasm of Wilde's social satires, but his subjugation to the Crown, his role as "jester at the court of his master" (*Ulysses* 2.44).[11] For Stephen, Wilde becomes not only that vision of Ireland which prostitutes itself by trading allegiances and degrading its art, but the bizarre spectacle of his trial, precipitated by the treachery of an English lover, also becomes a symbol of the Irish-born writer's betrayal by the Crown he serves. Stephen, unlike Wilde, has chosen not to press his art into anyone's service but his own; Wilde's ultimate humiliation by his adoptive society, his death as a destitute man—whether precipitated by his subjugation or by his rebellion—registers for Stephen the futility of both alternatives. Wilde's fate resonates with irony for Stephen as he confronts a similar choice—to serve the revival on its own terms and betray his art, or to work against it and risk its wrath. These then, are the high stakes of this scene: if Stephen is unable to change the attitudes of the revival, then he is left either to degrade his muse and join the movement (which he will not do), or to go his own way in obscurity. As Wilde's example demonstrates, either option is sure to exact great personal cost.

Just as Wilde ultimately was exiled by his adoptive countrymen, so also is Stephen dismissed in this scene by the Anglo-Irish nationalists who evince an intellectual form of the self-defeating, political isolationism that the Citi-

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zen will display in "Cyclops." L. H. Platt notes Stephen's acute sense of ostracism in this scene:

> The Shakespeare theory is the articulation of a dispossessed Catholic, ill at ease in his country's National Library, addressing the luminaries of the Anglo-Irish intelligentsia who are shaping Ireland's literary resurgence. Most are polite enough to listen; all seem determined to exclude him from their charmed circle. (265)

Stephen is never invited to join the evening's gathering of Irish literati at Moore's, nor is he a contender to author the national epic—consensus has determined "Moore is the man for it" (*Ulysses* 9.309–10). As Stephen rises to depart the library chamber with Mulligan, his failure to raise the conscience of the Revival and secure its acknowledgment of himself as an Irish artist is reiterated by Eglinton's benediction: "We shall see you tonight. . . . Notre ami Moore says *Malachi Mulligan* must be there" (*Ulysses* 9.1098–9, my emphasis). Stephen wonders, "What have I learned? Of them? Of me? (*Ulysses* 9.1113). "Cease to strive" (*Ulysses* 9.1221) is Stephen's acknowledgment of his defeat at the hands of his tormentors, and marks his weary surrender of his *Portrait* pledge to create an independent Irish conscience.

Of course Joyce did not hold England blameless for Irish political chaos, yet even when he presents the British presence, he refuses to allow Ireland to forfeit responsibility for its plight. In "Circe" a drunken and despairing Stephen broods over his own fate and his country's as he confronts the fourth and final contender for ascendancy in colonial Ireland: the British Crown. Face to face with two surly redcoats, Stephen echoes Yeats's Cathleen ni Houlihan, who despaired of British "strangers" in her house. A few pages later, Stephen's mind conjures Cathleen's very image in the form of "Old Gummy Granny": "You met with poor old Ireland and how does she stand?" the crone asks him (*Ulysses* 15.4587–8). Stephen's meetings with Ireland have convinced him, sadly, that her betrayal lies in her own intransigence. Stephen's cries resurrect images of familial deceit and self-victimization: "I know you, gammer! Hamlet, revenge! The old sow that eats her farrow!" (*Ulysses* 15.4582–3). When Private Carr decks Stephen because of the insult he perceives to Edward VII, Stephen begins to mumble another of Yeats's early poems about self-betrayal as he regains consciousness. "Who Goes with Fergus?" evokes the ancient Irish king who foolishly relinquished his throne and his sovereignty to his stepson, Conchubar, and never regained them. The lines represent Joyce's unrelenting refusal to allow colonial Ireland the fruitless luxury of "fulminat[ion] against . . . English tyranny" (*Critical Writings* 173). Like Fergus, Ireland has betrayed itself by twice forfeiting its sovereignty, a fact Joyce is careful to point out in his Triestine lectures.[12] Even

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more importantly, however, Ireland's own citizens continue to practice that moral and intellectual intolerance first demonstrated at *Portrait*'s Christmas dinner which renders true nation-ness an impossibility. The latter point is made abundantly clear when Carr attacks Stephen; of the mob in attendance, only Bloom comes to Stephen's defense; the rest fight among themselves:

> A Hag
>
> What call had the redcoat to strike the gentleman and he under the influence. Let them go and fight the Boers!
>
> The Bawd
>
> Listen to who's talking! Hasn't the soldier a right to go with his girl? He gave him the coward's blow.
>
> (*They grab at each other's hair, claw at each other and spit.*)
>
> (*Ulysses* 15.4758–64)

Again, the gendering of the scene helps to strengthen its theme of Ireland's self-betrayal. The principle female figure in this scene is the prostitute; the implications of the trope for Irish nation-ness are clear: defiled by their colonial oppressors, Cissy Caffrey, Biddy the Clap, and Cunty Kate nevertheless side with their British soldiers over a native Irishman; the voice of the bawd goes so far as to claim, "The red's as good as the green. And better. Up the soldiers! Up King Edward!" (*Ulysses* 15.4519–20). In such a setting, Irish culture can only loll semiconscious on the pavement, nursing a sore jaw.

In his final confrontation with the "pathologies of power," then, Stephen's defeat is complete; he has been silenced by all: Irish Catholics, Protestant unionists, Protestant nationalists, and British soldiers. Unlike Joyce, Stephen will never be a successful Irish writer; he is finally unable to make his voice heard over those who would employ their class structures, histories, and rhetoric to suppress it. To Stephen as well as to Joyce, each restrictive ideology ironically silences the voice of Irish nationhood as violently and effectively as Private Carr's fist.

NOTES

[1] Kershner argues that Stephen derives his "romantic and heroic" self-image from Dantes, and vicariously enacts through Melnotte (who rises from gardener to colonel) a desire to let his own class difference "fall away" (198, 227).

[2] James Fairhall takes a similar position; he also provides important contextual analysis of events such as the Phoenix Park murders and the fall of Parnell. According to Fairhall, it was Joyce's objective in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* to "destabilize the very basis of modern history—the idea that historical narratives

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can somehow 'tell the truth' about a complex event, can recount what 'actually' happened" (xii).

[3] In "DissemiNation," Homi Bhabha has observed the essential plurality of minority discourse and noted the power of these voices to undermine the master discourse by "antagoniz[ing] the implicit power to generalize, to produce the sociological solidity" (306). What I believe Joyce objects to is not this vital plurality, but the predilection of individual minority discourses to drown out one another and to create a new hegemony. I use Benedict Anderson's term *nation-ness* to imply that "imagined political community" which may be infused by, but is ultimately distinct from, nationalism(s) (4).

[4] Partha Chatterjee helpfully has delineated the "inner" and "outer" realms constructed by nationalist movements. Chatterjee argues that nation builders desire to preserve "inner," or spiritual, elements—language, custom, and religion—from the influences of Anglification, but that they wish to erase difference in the "outer," or material, realms; for instance, in application of the law, development of economies, and access to education. Because the "home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual quality of the national culture, and women . . . take the main responsibility for protecting and nurturing this quality," women's issues and issues of sexuality, Chatterjee argues, were frequently shunted into the "inner" domain of nationalisms as traditions to be preserved rather than erased (126).

[5] See also Cheryl Herr's study of Irish melodrama. Herr's analysis is borne out by innumerable representations in Irish revolutionary ballads of Ireland as embattled woman. Katharine Simms reports that as early as 1364, the inauguration ode for one native Irish ruler, Niall Mor O'Neill, began:

> Ireland is a woman risen again
> from the horrors of reproach . . .
> she was owned for a while by foreigners,
> she belongs to Irishmen after that. (76)

More contemporary to Joyce's era, *The Rising of the Moon* (a play by Lady Gregory, produced by the Abbey Theatre in 1907), turns on an Irish ballad that employs the suffering female to symbolize Irish oppression. "The Song of Granuaile" introduces a "matron fair" who sings of the wrongs done to Granuaile/Ireland/herself:

> Her head was bare, her hands and feet with iron bands were bound,
> Her pensive strain and plaintive wail mingles with the evening gale,
> And the song she sang with mournful air, I am old Granuaile. (29–30)

[6] Spoo argues that Stephen's mother, appearing as she does in the ghoulish dream he recollects early in *Ulysses*'s "Telemachus" episode, also personifies the "nightmare" of history that Stephen attempts to contest throughout the novel. According to Spoo, "For Joyce and for Stephen history is the uncanny maternal body returning to menace the surviving son, a compulsive ghost that represents a meaningless, horrific repetition of the same" (18).

[7] Robert Adams provides an early analysis of the errors in Deasy's discourse; Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* is similarly helpful in sorting out verity from falsehood. In his discussion of "Nestor," Spoo also supplies important analysis of Deasy's inconsistencies.

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[8] Spoo has suggested that Stephen's recollection in "Scylla and Charybdis" of his earlier conversation with Deasy implies that he views Eglinton, Russell, and Deasy all as "totalizing" Platonists and distrusts them equally: "Stephen [here] pits entelechy against teleology, history against spirit: 'Streams of tendency and eons they worship. God: noise in the street: very peripatetic. . . . Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past (9.85–89)'" (Spoo 72).

[9] First published in 1935, Eglinton's *Irish Literary Portraits* records his impressions of (and his distaste for) "the Irish Literary Movement" and its principal figures: Yeats, Russell, Moore, and Joyce. "For me," Eglinton writes,

> Ireland has always been a country rather than a 'nation.' . . . I was brought up to an inherited dislike for the green flags and reedy orchestration of nationalist demonstrations, and this remained at the back of my mind even when Yeats, A. E. and Arthur Griffith got hold of me and tried to turn me into a nationalist. . . . The actual program of Irish nationalism, the escapade of having a separate language, the apotheosis of Wolfe Tone and Parnell, the jubilation over everything that embarrassed England . . . were entirely distasteful to me. Ireland will always appear to me to have been more interesting, both to itself and to the world at large, under the old conditions: a country which has rejected its natural spiritual destiny, and whose poets all made the mistake of going into politics. (10–11)

[10] Although Yeats certainly comes in for his share of criticism, it does not emanate from Stephen. It is Mulligan who accuses Yeats of hypocrisy in praising his patron, Lady Augusta Gregory, while Stephen has "slate[d] her drivel to Jaysus" (*Ulysses* 9.1160).

[11] Wilde was not the only Irish writer to swap allegiances, as Stephen sees it; he is the rule, rather than the exception. In "Nestor," Stephen reflects: "Why had they chosen all that part? Not wholly for the smooth caress. For them too history was a tale like any other too often heard, their land a pawnshop" (*Ulysses* 2.45–47).

[12] Referring to Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster, Joyce writes: "the fact is that the English came to Ireland at the repeated requests of a native king" (*Critical Writings* 162).

Simms provides a concise explanation of the twelfth-century struggles for omnipotence among the various Irish kings, including MacMurrough, who was also known as king of Dublin: "Dubliners," she noted, "apparently preferred the prestige and comparative independence of association with a distant national ruler to the domination of a local tyrant" (47).

The second example of Ireland's abdication occurred several centuries later with the 1800 Act of Union, which dissolved the Irish parliament. "Parliamentary union," Joyce contends, "was not legislated at Westminster but at Dublin, by a parliament elected by the vote of the people of Ireland, a parliament corrupted and undermined . . . by the agents of the English prime minister, but an Irish parliament nevertheless" (*Critical Writings* 162).

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Rereading *Ulysses:* "Ithaca" and Modernist Allegory

Stephen Sicari

The initial purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how Joyce employs, as an organizing principle for his novel, the kind of allegory Saint Paul instituted and medieval exegetes of the Bible perfected in understanding the relation of the Old Testament to the New. This approach allows us to establish the relation of the later episodes in *Ulysses*, so wildly experimental in nature, to the earlier naturalistic episodes as analogous to the way the New Testament is taken to "reread" features from the Old. What is gained is an understanding of the later experimental episodes as "rereadings" of the earlier episodes in the hope of isolating and focusing on an aspect of "reality" that naturalism is ill equipped to present or acknowledge, an aspect of reality we can refer to as the eternal, the permanent, the spiritual. It is in "Ithaca" that Joyce establishes a fixed point that governs the meaning of the rest of the novel.

Perhaps the thorniest problem facing the last two decades of scholarship on *Ulysses* has been to find ways to account for the decision to begin the novel with such lucid depiction of sights and sounds and smells, as well as the extraordinary presentation of the thoughts of fictional characters in the interior monologue for which the opening episodes are famous, only to abandon such "realism" in favor of the innovations of the later episodes.[1] My thesis allows us to say that Joyce is not abandoning realism but instead has followed nineteenth-century naturalism to its limit, exhausting its resources and needing new ones if he is to be able to present in Bloom what he wishes for us to find, that in this unassuming ordinary man lies, hidden from the naturalistic narrator's eyes, a dimension that can be called a "Christ dimension." Traditional models of narrative technique having proved inadequate, Joyce experiments boldly to expand Bloom's significance without

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denying the validity of what naturalism can present. To accomplish in Bloom what Eliot called "the intersection of the timeless with time,"[2] Joyce returns to the central mystery of Christianity, the Incarnation, and the model of reading that was able to comprehend that mystery, the allegory of theologians.

I am acutely aware that this thesis will meet with some resistance because it is still somewhat unfashionable to assert that any work of literature, no less a work as complex and heteroclite as *Ulysses*, can be approached as having established a fixed center, a transcendental signified that governs its meaning. Inherent in my argument, then, is the contention that Joyce's allegory is a hallmark of modernism in its attempt to defy reductionist accounts of ideals as the result of mere human construction and to point to an event outside the web of language that can ground our idealism. Outside of language is the Christ event; outside of words is the Word.

TWO KINDS OF ALLEGORY

One of the most important events in the history of biblical exegesis occurs within the Bible itself, when Saint Paul explains how a Christian is to read certain events in Hebrew Scriptures. As Robert Hollander explains, "It is in Galatians 4:22–26 that we find the first explicit Christian use of the word 'allegory'" (58). This passage reads as follows:

> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

Paul's "spiritual" reading of the Old Testament story does not deny the historical validity of the story: Abraham had his two sons in the way Genesis described. But there is another level of significance for this story, one that does not cancel out the validity of Genesis, one that can only be read after the Christ event, and one that "fulfills" the letter with the spiritual truth. The Old Testament story is "reread" from the privileged position of one living after the Christ event.

It is my argument that Joyce uses just this kind of allegory in writing *Ulysses*, and he devises a passage in "Ithaca" that instructs us about how to read his text in a way strikingly similar to Saint Paul's instruction to the

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Galatians. In this pivotal late episode, the catechistical narrator describes the "previous intimations of the result" of the Gold Cup Bloom had throughout the day before reading the *Evening Telegraph* in the cabman's shelter:

> In Bernard Kiernan's licensed premises 8, 9, and 10 Little Britain Street: in David Byrne's licensed premises, 14 Duke Street: in O'Connell street lower, outside Graham Lemon's when a dark man had placed in his hand a throwaway (subsequently thrown away), advertising Elijah, restorer of the Church in Zion: in Lincoln place outside the premises of F. W. Sweny and Co (limited), dispensing chemists, when, when Frederick M. Bantam Lyons had rapidly and successively requested, perused and restituted the copy of the current issue of the *Freeman's Journal and National Press* which he had been about the throw away (subsequently thrown away), he had proceeded toward the edifice of the Turkish and Warm Baths, 11 Leinster street, with the light of inspiration shining in his countenance and bearing in his arms the secret of the race, graven in the language of prediction. (17.329–41)

In this passage, the "Ithaca" narrator reflects on earlier moments in Bloom's day and "rereads" them. What is the relation of the version of events in "Ithaca" to earlier versions, especially to the one described at the end of "Lotus Eaters" when Bloom inadvertently gives Bantam Lyons the tip about Throwaway, the dark horse who wins the Gold Cup? Unknowingly and accidentally, Bloom predicted the winner, and he is perhaps amused and bewildered at this coincidence. The "Ithaca" narrator, however, is not confused but understands it in a way that Bloom, the character in a realistic novel, does not. For the last lines quoted above depict Bloom walking away from Lyons in a very different way than was described at the end of "Lotus Eaters." There, "Mr. Bloom folded the sheets again to a neat square and lodged the soap in it, smiling. . . . He walked cheerfully toward the mosque of the baths" (5.543–44, 549); in "Ithaca," he is seen "with the light of inspiration shining in his countenance and bearing in his arms the secret of the race, graven in the language of prediction." The narrator in "Ithaca" sees more and differently than the narrator in "Lotus Eaters." The earlier narrator can only see the "realistic" content of the event, what actually happened in what we can call the "literal dimension of reality." The "Ithaca" narrator, however, is responding to and recording a different dimension of reality, what we can call the "allegorical dimension of reality." Both are equally valid and truthful, and they do not cancel each other or stand opposed. As "Lotus Eaters" has it, Bloom "walked cheerfully" to the baths; this is what occurs in the literal dimension of reality, and Bloom's interior monologue betrays no sign of the solemn and awesome powers ascribed to him by the

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later narrator. Yet what "Ithaca" presents is equally valid, for the significance of that earlier event is only felt now—in the penultimate episode—is only understood now, and can only be expressed now. The "Ithaca" narrator can see, in the Bloom of 10 o'clock in the morning, "the light of inspiration shining in his countenance." It was there, at that time, when Bloom walked to the baths; but only the later narrator, who is in the position to reread the event, can see it.

This passage from "Ithaca" is Joyce's way of giving us the exegetical clue about how to read his novel. The later narrator is more privileged than the earlier one in that he can see what "Lotus Eaters" depicted, but also more, the "truth" of the earlier episode's event. The "Lotus Eaters" narrator is like the authors of the Old Testament, offering precise accounts of actual "historical" or "literal" events; but this narrator, like those authors, is blocked from a full understanding of what is narrated. The train of events that began with the inadvertent tip is fulfilled when we say that Bloom is an "advertising Elijah," an ad canvasser with prophetic powers.

It is difficult to determine exactly how Joyce came to the decision to write *Ulysses* in this manner, but the way he establishes his allegory in "Ithaca" suggests that Dante's example is crucial. For Joyce presents Bloom's and Stephen's exit from 7 Eccles Street with the background music of the 113th Psalm, the very psalm Dante uses to describe his method of writing allegory.[3] Charles Singleton effected a revolution in Dante studies when he advanced the poet's own distinction between two kinds of allegory, what Dante calls the "allegory of poets" and the "allegory of theologians," arguing that he writes the *Commedia* using the latter:

> The radical difference lies in the nature of the literal sense in one and the other. The "allegory of poets," which is that of fable, of parable (and hence is also to be found in the Scriptures), is a mode in which the first literal sense is one devised, fashioned (*fictio* in its original meaning) in order to conceal, and in concealing to convey, a truth. Not so in the other mode, as we may see from the example cited [by Dante in the famous letter to Can Grande]. There the first sense is historical, as Dante says it is, and not "fiction." The children of Israel did depart from Egypt in the time of Moses. Whatever the other sense may be, this first sense abides, stands quite on its own, is not devised "for the sake of." Indeed it was generally recognized that in Holy Scripture the historical sense might at times be the only sense there. These things have been so; so they have happened in time. This is the record of them. (62)

The "allegory of theologians" allows Dante to write about his spiritual journey in such a way that his own itinerary is taken as true, while at the same

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time occasionally signifying on other levels of meaning (the allegorical, moral, and anagogic levels, as he specifies in the letter to Can Grande). The "allegory of poets" (the one usually meant when literary critics use the term *allegory*) is based on an entirely different conception of the "letter," of the literal sense. The letter is devised to suggest some other meaning, the one standing for the other and having no validity in itself, on its own, for itself. When critics object to having *Ulysses* called an allegory, it must be the "allegory of poets" that they have in mind, and objections to this kind of allegory for Joyce's novel seem to me absolutely correct. The critics who want to emphasize the "naturalistic" aspect of the early episodes at the expense of the more "symbolic" aspects of the later ones do not understand why Joyce would expend such energy and skill at representing nature (that is, character, scene, plot) only to dissolve it. The "literal" or "historical" sense of *Ulysses* is designed to be accepted as real and not devised to be effaced by the "truth." But the "allegory of theologians" allows Joyce, as it allowed Dante, to work on the literal level of meaning in such a way as to enlarge its significance, to expand its meaning, to find within the literal another, equally valid, level of meaning. Bloom is always a "realistic" character and becomes in the later chapters, also and at one and the same time, a moral exemplum of Christian charity. Those critics who follow Wilson and Goldberg have been right in insisting on the importance of plot and character established by the early episodes but wrong to regret the "ornamental complications" (Wilson's phrase) of the later ones. For the early episodes do not stand to the later episodes as the literal stands to the symbolic meanings in the "allegory of poets" but as the literal stands to the symbolic in the "allegory of theologians." The later episodes are a "rereading" of the earlier ones, establishing another level of signification within the literal events, a level that does not cancel but coexists. Having inherited a novelistic tradition that was fundamentally defined by its emphasis on the realistic and the plausible and that was becoming increasingly determined by an extreme version of realism best called naturalism, Joyce feels compelled to continue that tradition in his own brand of prose fiction (Dubliners is a wonderful example of naturalism) even if his larger and ultimate ambition is to find room in this tradition for a presentation of a set of ideals. A naturalism not effaced by ideals, an idealism not unloosed from but firmly grounded in naturalism: That's what the allegory of theologians makes possible for a modernist allegory.

It is the essential feature of the "allegory of theologians" that certain literal events of the Old Testament are found to have their fulfillment in the Christ event. Paul, who initiates this way of reading the Old Testament, is "the first great Christian theologian of the Incarnation" (Hollander 59).

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And this is true of Dante's use of this kind of allegory: "With its first meaning as an historical meaning, the allegory of the Divine Comedy is grounded in the mystery of the Incarnation" (Singleton 74). John Freccero emphasizes the way events are read in Dante's poem from the perspective of the Incarnation:

> This retrospective illumination is the very essence of biblical allegory, what Dante called the "allegory of theologians." The Christ event was the end term of an historical process, the "fullness of time," from the perspective of which the history of the world might be read and judged according to a meaning which perhaps even the participants in the history could not perceive. (132–33)

All events are to be judged in "retrospective illumination"[4] from the privileged point of view of the Incarnation, the "Logos" made flesh. It's not just any set of ideals that Joyce presents if we are to call his method "modernist allegory." We must learn to see how "Ithaca" contains an analogous "Christ event" and so functions as the fixed perspective from which the rest of the novel may be read and understood, in just the same way as the Christ event functions as the fixed point from which to review Hebrew Scriptures. The novel is "reread" from the privileged vantage point of "Ithaca."

One last point by way of introduction: This proposed thesis will also show that Joyce is taking pains to teach us how to read his novel as he presents enough exegetical clues to direct our way toward the fixed point of "Ithaca." This thesis will cause, no doubt, some discomfort among the practitioners of what Charles Altieri has labeled "the various hermeneutics of suspicion"[5] because I am asserting the primacy of the author's intention as he points us to the allegory of theologians as our guide to *Ulysses*. This author's intention is not implicit and to be assumed; it is made part of the text itself.

THE LIMITS OF NATURALISM

In an age of skepticism, an allegorical figure is open to the keen scrutiny and facile mockery of the practical man, and so Joyce opens his novel with the voice and sensibility of one of the greatest mockers in all literature, Buck Mulligan. The very first scene in the novel presents Mulligan in the process of offering a mock Eucharist. For a Catholic, the Eucharist is the sacrament in which ordinary bread and wine is transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ; in other words, the Eucharist is the ritual celebration of the Incarnation, of the active participation of God in human affairs as a human being. To mock the Incarnation is to mock this possibility of the holy inter-

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acting with and granting significance to the human dimension. Robert Bell sees Mulligan's role well:

> Buck persistently burlesques everything abstract, ethereal, or idealistic. Nothing is left unchallenged; everything is open to travesty, parody, mockery. The tug downward is insistent in *Ulysses*, and Buck Mulligan is the apostle of gravity. (14)

Joyce opens the novel with the voice and sensibility of a glib and witty mocker who is ready to deny and reject the kind of elevation to heroic or ideal height that Joyce intends to perform with Bloom. But Bell is wrong to say that "the text eventually approaches Buck's view" (21). Buck Mulligan dominates the opening of *Ulysses* and represents challenge set for this novel, to overcome the ironic reduction of the cynical mocker whose sophistication and wit are turned against ideals.

It is appropriate that the model for Buck Mulligan just happened to be in 1904 a medical student, for the perspective on life of a physician could tend to reduce most considerations to a material, physical level:

> —And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own? You saw only your mother die. I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom. It's a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter. (1: 204–07)

Such a view is earned by hard experience and is valid, as far as it goes. "It's a beastly thing" is a fine and sincere assessment of death from a physician's educated view, but we may (and I think ought) to balk at "and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter." Buck's "naturalistic" view is valid but partial, severely limited to and by the material world and its concerns. It is Buck's tendency to reduce most concerns to such a "low" level by his banter and mockery. Opposed to the reductive mockery of science is Stephen's poetic sensibility. When the old woman delivers the milk, Mulligan treats her with contempt (mocking her religiosity, his favorite target), while Stephen attempts to elevate her significance through his imaginative powers:

> Old and secret she had entered from a morning world, maybe a messenger. She praised the goodness of the milk, pouring it out. Crouching by a patient cow at daybreak in the lush field, a witch on her toadstool, her wrinkled fingers quick at the squirting dugs. They lowed about her whom they knew, dewsilky cattle. Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning. (1:399–406)

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While Hayman calls her "an allegory of Ireland" (36), I want to call this a failed allegory, a sign of Stephen's desire to see higher significance and his inability (thus far, at any rate) to do so in a way that satisfies the strenuous demands of naturalism. For in Stephen's musings, the old woman is only a figure in the "allegory of poets"; her actuality is effaced as Stephen tries to make her something more than what she is. We have with Mulligan and Stephen the two poles that the "allegory of theologians" attempts to bridge, the reductive irony of naturalism and the elevated significance of "symbolisme."

That the old woman ignores Stephen and fawns over Mulligan is enough to explain the last word of "Telemachus," *usurper.* The naturalism of a Mulligan has triumphed over the symbolism of the 90s. My point thus far is that the opening episodes establish what Karen Lawrence calls a "narrative norm" (35), which it is the task of the later episodes to work on. As interesting, funny, touching, and incredibly lucid as these opening episodes are, they are inadequate to carry on Joyce's larger purpose, to establish an ideal of behavior. Ricardo Quinones is the best commentator on this aspect of modernism, as a response to the triumph of mechanistic science in the nineteenth century: "what had been a highly effective and inspiring code had reached a state of exhaustion by the end of the nineteenth century" (65). The science of the Mulligans, which fails to see anything beyond the material, is the dead end that the opening episodes of *Ulysses* reflect and parallel. Jeffrey Perl quotes Nietzsche to make a point about modern drama that is useful to my argument: Nietzsche entertains the

> wish that science—or the theoretical Weltanschauung—be "at last pushed to its limits and, faced with those limits [be] forced to renounce its claim to universal validity." In the new drama, science and symbolism will embrace with the fierceness of enemies who have fallen in love. (119)

It seems fair to say that the opening six episodes of *Ulysses* are naturalism "pushed to its limits"—that is, they are an epitome of naturalistic prose. What we must see is that such prose is exhausted and so must be challenged and supplemented by something higher. It has done what it could do; it has exposed what needs to be exposed, and now needs to be confronted with and reconciled to the demands of symbolism.

That Bloom's adventures begin with "Calypso" suggests that Bloom is captive as his day begins. Bloom is held captive not only by Molly but also by the style of the episode; that is, he is caught within a narrative that presents only the literal level of human existence and can offer no possibility of an imaginative escape from time and space. We as readers are held bound by

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the narrative style to remain within Bloom's consciousness, seeing only what he sees, hearing only what he hears, thinking only what he thinks. Bloom tends toward gloominess this morning, as is only natural on a day on which he is to attend a funeral and confront, internally at any rate, the prospect of Molly's infidelity. And as he tries to escape from time and place by constructing fantasies (about the Near East especially), it is his own gravity that punctures the illusions he sets up as comforts: "Probably not a bit like it really" (4.99). After a brief indulgence in a fantasy of idleness in "the garden of the world," Bloom remembers the formula for the law of falling bodies: "Thirtytwo feet per second per second. Law of falling bodies: per second per second. They all fall to the ground. The earth" (4.44–46). He needs no Buck Mulligan, "the apostle of gravity," to puncture easy and indulgent flights of fancy. Held within a naturalistic depiction of consciousness, Bloom has no hope for escape and is a prisoner to time and space. Nothing will be able to get off the ground and stay there as long as this kind of narrative is in place. (Let's recall here Joyce's famous letter about "Ithaca" to which I will refer again later in this paper: "not only will the reader know everything and know it in the coldest baldest way, but Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze" [*Letters*, I, 159–60]. What will enable them to defy gravity in "Ithaca" is the way the reader learns about events.)

Bloom's first three episodes are designed to give us a clear depiction of this central character, but also to show us the limit of naturalism, that naturalism is becoming exhausted. In "Calypso" Bloom is a prisoner, to his wife and to the style; in "Lotus Eaters" he is confronted by various "narcotics" used by most Dubliners to escape reality; in "Hades" he confronts death. We applaud his resilience but note that his achievements in these episodes are negative. He is able to avoid a tendency to depression in the first, temptations to lethargy in the second, and despair in the third; but he achieves nothing positively. It will take "Wandering Rocks," the 10th episode, to expose for us the absolute limit of the naturalistic method. For in this episode, written apparently entirely in the "initial style," Bloom and Stephen are made to look no bigger, no more important, no more special than anyone else in the novel. This is the verge of naturalism's devotion to realistic depiction, for what could be more realistic than to acknowledge that Bloom and Stephen are just two more Dubliners barely getting through their daily business. Within naturalism, we are learning, no flight above the maze of Dublin can be sustained, no ideal able to withstand the slings and arrows of reductive irony can be constructed.[6]

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FROM NATURALISM TO ABSTRACTION

With "Aeolus" Joyce begins his gradual loosening of the naturalistic narration's hold on character and plot. I will look briefly at this episode to pursue the following point, that by defying the standards of naturalistic prose Joyce is defying the traditional novelistic concern for representation in a way parallel to the defiance of representation by modern abstract painters.

While there is little to suggest that Joyce was reading T. E. Hulme's work, it would not be surprising if he had, given Joyce's close association with Hulme's champion, Ezra Pound. But I am less interested in tracing a line of influence than in assigning a certain context for Joyce's experiments in abstraction that commence with "Aeolus." For Hulme's writing on modern abstract art provides us with a keen perspective from which to view *Ulysses*. In the essay "Humanism," Hulme sees the tendency toward abstraction as a way to break away from the grip of humanism and to establish a higher set of permanent or absolute values:

> The disgust with the trivial and accidental characteristics of living shapes, the searching after an austerity, a *perfection* and rigidity which vital things can never have, lead here to the use of forms which can almost be called geometrical. Man is subordinate to certain absolute values: There is no delight in the human form, leading to its *natural* reproduction; it is always distorted to fit into the more abstract forms which convey an intense religious emotion. (53)

We must be careful in transposing what Hulme says about abstract visual art to Joyce's novel. For instance, to say that there is a "disgust with the trivial and accidental characteristics of living shapes" in *Ulysses* would be to miss the great joy of getting to know Bloom "from the inside."[7] But I want to argue that Joyce does react against the traditional representations of the "human" and "vital" and "natural" that he provides in the opening episodes, distorting these to "fit more abstract forms which convey an intense religious emotion." The Bloom from the early episodes is worked upon until he has become "abstract"—that is, abstracted from time and space—standing for values that are permanent and absolute.

Michael Levenson documents the development of Hulme's thought, and sees in "Humanism" and "Modern Art" its emergence beyond the rather narrow confines of the earlier distinction between "Romanticism and Classicism" to a more compelling distinction between naturalism and abstraction, between humanism and antihumanism.[8] It was Hulme's reading of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* that enabled him to begin his critique of humanism, a critique to be based on Worringer's critique of

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empathy. There are two tendencies in art, one toward empathy and one toward abstraction. Empathy is "the pleasure we take in viewing works of art that are naturalistic or realistic as we find in them an objectification of our own pleasure in activity, and our own vitality" (85). In geometric art, "there is no delight in nature and no striving after vitality. Its forms are always what can be described as stiff and lifeless." This kind of art is based on the "desire to create a certain abstract geometrical shape, which, being durable and permanent shall be a refuge from the flux and impermanence of outside nature" (86). Joyce gives us in the opening episodes an extraordinarily lucid depiction of the world of flux, out of which the rest of the novel seeks to extract something durable and permanent. What Hulme says about abstract geometric art I will be arguing about in the later episodes of *Ulysses*: "All art of this character turns the organic into something inorganic, it tries to translate the changing and limited into something unlimited and necessary" (106).

It is instructive to reflect on Michael Groden's discoveries about possible changes in the conception Joyce had of his novel as it progressed and as he was reviewing the earlier episodes in light of the later ones on which he was working. According to Brook Thomas,

> What Groden does not point out, however, is that changes from stage to stage correspond closely to Joyce's own re-reading of his text in preliminary form. A major departure from his initial technique occurred soon after Joyce must have re-read drafts of the early chapters for publication in the Little Review. Similarly, Joyce's final revisions, many reflexive in nature, are prompted by his reading of the book in proof before final publication. (281).

Elaborating on the work of Litz and Groden, Thomas provides a fundamental insight to the writing of this novel, that the later episodes are the result of Joyce's own "re-reading" of *Ulysses*.

So we can ask what is it that Joyce hopes to accomplish as he revises "Aeolus" for final publication, adding the often comic headlines that disrupt the "flow" of what is still, for the most part, a naturalistic narrative? The answer is precisely that the flow is disrupted, that the illusion of this prose to mime a "stream of consciousness" is punctured by these bold and loud headlines that freeze the action. It's as if Bloom's or Stephen's thoughts and the action surrounding them stop for a moment as we have to read these often absurd headlines. We become aware of the artifice, that what we are reading is a book and not life, and a book that no longer wishes to be simply a transparent window onto the world. This is the beginning of

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the abstraction of Bloom and Stephen, of taking them out of the naturalistic context of the earlier episodes.[9]

A wonderful example of this often comic process of abstraction occurs in "Aeolus" when Professor MacHugh flosses his teeth:

> He took a reel of dental floss from his waistcoat pocket and breaking off a piece, twanged it smartly between two and two of his resonant unwashed teeth.
> —Bingbang, bangbang.
> Mr. Bloom, seeing the coast clear, made for the inner door. (7.371–75)

In no piece of naturalistic prose could the process of flossing one's teeth produce the sound "Bingbang, bangbang," no matter how resonant one's teeth may be. The combination of scrupulous attention to detail (we watch him remove the floss from the pocket, break off a piece, "twang" it smartly; we even learn that the teeth are unwashed!) with the absurdity of the noise the process produces is a perfect example of the way Joyce works in these middle episodes, poking fun at the naturalistic narrator, behind his back, as it were. Lurking behind the naturalistic narrator, this other narrator (whom Kenner, following Hayman, calls "the arranger"), acts in such a way as to make the reader acutely aware of the movement of this text beyond naturalistic representation, of possibilities beyond naturalism.

Naturalism is exposed most vigorously in "Cyclops," as the episode alternates between the meanness of the most cynical naturalistic narrator and the excess of the most inflated language. The action or plot of "Cyclops" is simple: Bloom will defend himself, energetically and even heroically, against a hostile antagonist, in a hostile environment, and within a narration that is equally hostile to him. For the unnamed "I" who narrates the "realistic" events of this episode hates Bloom. The mean-spirited naturalism that presents the main action—Bloom's preaching against violence and his advocacy of love—is juxtaposed to rhetoric so inflated that no one can take anything it might say seriously. Both narrations, the high and the low, are "one-eyed" and thus "Cyclopian." Neither perspective can be trusted as truthful.

What is advanced in this episode is a possible elevation of Bloom, as a possible prophet (Elijah), or apostle to the gentiles (St. Paul), or even Christ. As Joyce begins to abstract Bloom from the naturalistic context of the early episodes, he also begins to play with these sorts of identifications more freely and fully than he had earlier. In "Lestrygonians," Bloom is given a "throwaway" and at first "misreads" it: "Bloo . . . Me? No. Blood of the lamb" (8.8–9). This piece of paper announces the coming of Dr. John Alexander Dowie, who apparently identifies himself with Elijah in that

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prophet's role as the restorer of the church in Zion. After his initial error of seeing his name on this piece of paper (and thus identifying himself with Elijah and Christ), Bloom "throws away" the "throwaway," which in "Wandering Rocks" makes its own procession through Dublin. This piece of crumpled paper is, I think, the wandering rock in question, noted by the narrator of this episode at 10.295, 10.752, 10.1096, each time associated with Elijah and in the last instance approaching the three-masted schooner *Rosevean*, that miraculous ship[10] Stephen saw over his shoulder at the end of "Proteus." The suggestion is that the naturalism of "Wandering Rocks" and the early episodes in general might come to ruin on this wandering rock that bears the possibility that Bloom may be associated with Elijah.

The "throwaway" that was "thrownaway" comes back in "Cyclops" as something to take seriously, as Bloom's inadvertent tip about "Throwaway" at the end of "Lotus Eaters" comes back to haunt him as the source of the animosity directed at him at Barney Kiernan's. For this episode comes to its climax with an overt identification of Bloom as Elijah. That the ending contains both elevated rhetoric of biblical grandeur and an ironic reduction of that language creates a tension for the reader, as a decision must be made about which voice—the one that elevates or the one that deflates—has authority. James Maddox asserts that the "Biblical grandeur and the Chaplinesque bumbling coexist, neither canceling out the other" (91). But it may just be that neither voice carries authority, that they cancel each other out. The two extreme perspectives in this episode alternate and give us one-sided and ultimately inadequate views of Bloom, who is either Elijah or a bumbling fool. We can turn to Joyce's early formulation of the difference between the classical and romantic temperaments to understand what is wrong in "Cyclops":

> A classical style, he said, is the syllogism of art, the only legitimate process from one world to another. Classicism is not the manner of any fixed age or of any fixed country: it is a constant state of the artistic mind. It is a temper of security and satisfaction and patience. The romantic temper, so often and so grievously misinterpreted and not more by others than by its own, is an insecure, unsatisfied, impatient temper which sees no fit abode here for its ideals and chooses therefore to behold them under insensible figures. As a result of this choice it comes to disregard certain limitations. Its figures are blown to wild adventures, lacking the gravity of solid bodies, and the mind that has conceived them ends by disowning them. The classical temper on the other hand, ever mindful of limitations, chooses rather to bend upon these present things and so to

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> work upon them and fashion them that the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered. (78)

This statement, though an early one and so not to be trusted entirely as one still having relevance to the man writing 10 years or so later, nonetheless may present Joyce's intentions in *Ulysses*. Joyce expresses through his earliest version of Stephen a deep mistrust of the romantic temper, which, unable to find any "fit abode for its ideals," impatiently creates its own figures which have no relation to "present things." It is most certainly Blake that he has in mind here, whom Stephen in "Nestor" criticizes for a "phrase of impatience, thud of Blake's wing of excess" (2.8–9). Romanticism is not to be mistrusted for its ideals but because it does not have the patience to find "the legitimate process from one world to the next." That is what the entire novel is about, and "Cyclops" is designed to reveal the inadequacy of the excessive rhetoric of the romantic temper. For what the passages that interrupt the mean-spirited narration parody is the sensibility that looks for the high and noble so single-mindedly and simple-mindedly that it twists and distorts and in the end lies about reality. Bloom is not Elijah, but neither is he the figure of foolishness that the nameless "I" presents. Both these extremes—the excess of romanticism and the excess of naturalism—miss what is present before them.

But the purpose of "Cyclops" is not solely negative. As Maddox puts it, "In these pages, Joyce fleshes out the Christ parallel and gives substance to the Citizen's sneer that Bloom is 'a new apostle to the gentiles'" (87). What seems most fascinating is that these parallels are not advanced in the lofty parodic passages (where we would have to dismiss them) but in the barroom scene as narrated by a man who hates Bloom. What is advanced as sarcasm (that Bloom is the successor to St. Paul as apostle to the gentiles), we are meant to take in some way seriously; for Bloom does preach about love in a hostile environment, risking his safety to some small but significant degree. What Bloom rather ineptly claims about himself—that "Christ was a Jew like me" (12.1808–09)—might have some validity. For what Joyce drops hints about in this episode and what we must strain to see through the distortion of excessive language, is that there is a dimension to Bloom's character that has its basis in the Christ event.

That we are not within Bloom's mind in this episode is worth our attention. Would we like to know how seriously he takes his own statements? Do we want to know what sort of trivia clutters his mind as he preaches about love, quotes Christ, or announces his own similarity to Christ? Most likely such "naturalistic" attention to Bloom's thoughts would drown out, or at least diminish, the drama of the episode. We know quite well his tendency

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to puncture illusions and ideals, and any identification or parallel with Christ that Joyce might be interested in developing would be doubted and rejected by the hero himself. We gain from not being in Bloom's mind precisely what abstract painters seek in their movement away from representation: We can focus more on what is essential, permanent, spiritual, eternal in Bloom, and less on what the time-bound Bloom is thinking.

THE ALLEGORICAL CLIMAX: READING FROM "ITHACA"

"Ithaca" offers a view of the action that is extraordinarily high and detached, in which Bloom and Stephen and eventually Molly appear quite distant and small. James Maddox overstates the case in saying, "The style loses sight of the human significance of the question and becomes absorbed in a purely mathematical calculation" (188). This failure to consider still the humanistic aspects of the story is a loss that most critics who emphasize style and technique share. Walton Litz has presented this problem most clearly:

> The notesheets provide overwhelming evidence that the 'dry rock pages of *Ithaca*' are supersaturated with Bloom's humanity, a humanity that is enhanced if anything by the impersonality of the prose. As any viewer of the recent film will remember, 'Ithaca' yielded scenes of far more warmth and feeling than those provided by such 'dramatic' episodes as 'Hades' and 'Nausicaa.' Once again, in the contrast between the apparent coldness of the episode's form and its actual human effects, we are confronted with a paradox to be solved. (393)

Stanley Sultan goes so far to say that "the catechism is as fully revealing of Bloom's inner life as are the early inner monologues" (288). The paradox then is this, that the most abstract episode is also the most human; but this is no paradox if we apply the "allegory of theologians" to this episode. For the literal dimension of reality is not to be lost in any way as an allegorical dimension takes shape and becomes dominant. This need to maintain the literal in this most abstract episode explains what Kenner has called "the aesthetic of delay," a phrase invented to describe the way *Ulysses* comes to its climax:

> The last two episodes, 'Ithaca' and 'Penelope,' supply missing facts for so many suspended patterns, momentous and trivial, that a reader who should work carefully through them sentence by sentence, equipped with perfect knowledge of the rest of the book, would experience bewilderment from the very profusion of small elements dropping into place. (*Ulysses* 79)

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We do learn more facts and details about Bloom in the last two episodes than we do through the other sixteen. It is only when the novel is almost over that we are given a description of Bloom: "height 5 ft 9 1/2 inches, full build, olive complexion" (17.2002–03). We learn what's in his desk drawers and on his bookshelves; we even know with precise exactitude the details of his financial status. As Bloom is elevated to the stars, he is made to appear just as "real" and "solid" a character as naturalism gave us to see. As Bloom is rendered in the "coldest baldest way," the patterns established by the naturalistic depiction are resolved as "a profusion of small elements drop into place"; "Ithaca," Kenner says later in the same book, "abounds in detailed revelations that refocus what we had thought we knew and substantiate what we only guessed" (*Ulysses* 141). The naturalistic novel is not finished with "Wandering Rocks," though that kind of narration is abandoned for the most part; the naturalistic novel is finished in "Ithaca" and "Penelope" as we learn so much new information about Bloom that we see him as a fully fleshed character as much as ever.

This is not to deny that the more obvious thrust of "Ithaca" is toward abstraction. But as I begin my exposition of what this climactic episode is meant to accomplish, I do not want to lose sight of the fact that Bloom still exists on the literal level of signification. In fact, I hope to show how the literal and allegorical levels exist simultaneously as the novel comes to its conclusion. The episode begins with two questions and answers that introduce us to the apparent tension between content and form. "What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?" is a detached and distant question that elicits pertinent information: They started walking "united both at normal walking pace"; "then, at reduced pace with interruptions of halt"; and finally "disparate, at relaxed walking pace." The answer is given with scientific accuracy and impersonality, and we are asked to read through this style to catch at the "human" or "novelistic" content. They begin walking "united" because Stephen needs help walking. They then walk "at reduced pace with interruptions of halt" as they stop, I am presuming, to talk. Finally, they walk at "relaxed pace" and are "disparate" as they approach 7 Eccles St., from which information we can infer that Stephen is now able to walk on his own ("disparate") and that they are in no hurry to get anywhere, perhaps because they are enjoying their conversation. This last conjecture is given some evidence by the second question and answer: "Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary?", upon which follows quite a lengthy list. Their walk is not silent or strained, but relaxed and friendly. The human content is still important and discernible through this "cold, bald" style. We are achieving distance, yet still observing a human scene. Not always is the information given with such scrupulosity always so directly

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relevant. After Bloom boils some water for their cocoa, we must read these two questions: "For what personal purpose could Bloom have applied the water so boiled?" and "What advantages attended shaving by night?" Bloom has no intention of shaving at this point, nor does the information about the advantages of night shaving help us (in any way I can see, at least) in following the "action" of the episode's plot. Such irrelevant information is quite frequent and I think is intended to suggest that the view from the cosmic height is often unfocused. From such height we may be able to detach ourselves from the pressures and strains of being time- and space-bound, but we lose focus. After a couple of other questions, the catechistical narrator asks what is on the shelves of the Blooms's kitchen dresser. Amid the objects listed in what we take as exhaustive detail are these:

> an empty pot of Plumtree's potted meat, an oval wicker basket bedded with fibre and containing one Jersey pear, a halfempty bottle of William Gilbey and Co's white invalid port, half disrobed of its swathe of coralpink tissue paper. (17.304–07)

These are, of course, signs of Boylan's visit, and if we were in an earlier episode we would be watching Bloom's agile mind trying to absorb this impression and maintain his equanimity. Here, these items are almost hidden in a list of ordinary domestic objects. The narrator supplies pertinent information without knowing himself that it is pertinent. We are detached and distant but also constantly supplying the human plot and guessing at the human emotions. If Bloom is to rise to the stars, it will be as full body, as a flesh-and-blood character.

So much is implied in a detail supplied in the course of narrating Bloom's stratagem in getting into his locked house without his key. He climbs over the area railings and lowers "his body gradually by its length of five feet nine and a half" (thus we know his height) "to within two feet ten inches of the area pavement," from which position he prepares to fall. "Did he fall" may seem a silly question but underscores the episode's purpose, to raise Bloom to the stars. Yes, he did fall

> [by] his body's known weight of eleven stone and four pounds in avoirdupois measure, as certified by the graduated machine for periodical selfweighing in the premises of Francis Froedman, pharmaceutical chemist of 19 Frederck street, north, on the last feast of the Ascension. (17.86–87, 90–94)

He falls according to his weight, which is the measure of the gravitational force exerted by the Earth on his body's mass; that is, he falls because of gravity, that tendency to bring objects down to Earth and which must be

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overcome if Bloom is to reach the starry heights. Joyce implies that such may happen by telling us the day of his last weighing, the feast of the Ascension, when Christ, who is a flesh-and-blood creature as well as the divine, overcame the force of gravity and rose to heaven. The importance of this moment in the novel becomes more certain when we recall Mulligan's "Ballad of Joking Jesus," which mocks, among other aspects of Christ's divinity, his Ascension ("Olivet's breezy—Goodbye, now, goodbye!"). Mulligan's mockery was preparing us for the serious treatment of just this possibility.

It is in this light that we are reminded of Bloom's inadvertent prediction of the winner of the Gold Cup, which is reinterpreted in "Ithaca" as a prophecy. The elevation of Bloom to the status of an Elijah, a St. Paul, or even Christ that was attempted explicitly in "Cyclops" was insufficient. The rhetoric used to describe that elevation at the end of that episode is not able to remain free from the mockery that punctures ideals in the modern age. The elevation of Bloom to some sort of ideal status must be indirect and subtle, and thus safe from the mocker's irony. Stephen's role in *Ulysses* thus becomes clearer: He is the one who may be able to recognize the Incarnation; such is his challenge. He has left the mocker's company and has joined Bloom's, and we are to watch if he can see in Bloom the man something other also there, some allegorical dimension. We recall his retort to Deasy in "Nestor," that God is a shout in the street. That was an improvement on Deasy's misunderstanding of history, but can Stephen see the Incarnation in someone unassuming, humble, apparently quite ordinary?[11]

Just the fact that Stephen allows Bloom to bring him home suggests that he feels something special about Bloom. We recall that famous moment in "Eumaeus," when Bloom

> passed his left arm in Stephen's right and led him on accordingly. —Yes, Stephen said uncertainly because he thought he felt a strange kind of flesh of a different man approach him, sinewless and wobbly and all that. (16.1721–23)

Stephen's uncertain "Yes" is proleptic of Molly's ringing affirmative. When Bloom finally does get into his house, he takes off his hat, gets a candle, lights it at the stove, walks to the front door. All this takes four minutes, and Stephen is still there, waiting patiently. The narrator does not make this human point but gives us enough information to do so: Stephen must want to be with Bloom to wait so long. The next question and answer even more certainly and directly shows us a different Stephen: "Did Stephen obey his sign? Yes."

What is it that Stephen has seen in Bloom? This is what is frustrating about Joyce's decision to abandon naturalism, that we do not have access to

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Stephen's complex thoughts about Bloom and what he means. We are given information from an extraordinarily lofty vantage point that we must sift through to arrive at an answer to this question. But we are able to read the "human" aspects of this "abstract" episode so well because we came to know the characters so well in the early "naturalistic" episodes. We draw upon them as we read "Ithaca." So when we read that Stephen accepted Bloom's "marks of special hospitality" "seriously as they drank in jocoserious silence Epps's massproduct, the creature cocoa" (17.9, 369–70), we have enough experience of Stephen to realize that his serious acceptance of someone's generosity is something new for him, at least new and unique on this particular day of his life. When Bloom talks about his job and repeats for Stephen his idea for an ad (the illuminated showcart in which two smartly dressed girls are writing), Stephen not only is not uninterested but also makes up his own ad. He even tells Bloom his story *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine* or *The Parable of the Plums*, which Bloom seems to appreciate as an indication of Stephen's promise for "certain possibilities of financial, social, personal, and sexual success" (17.646–47). Stephen's day comes to its climax when the narrator tells us of his "quasisensation" of Bloom's "concealed identity": "The traditional figure of hypostasis, depicted by Johannes Damascenus, Lentulus Romanus and Epiphanius Monachus as leucodermic, sesquipedalian with winedark hair" (17.782, 783–85). The names mentioned here are writers who dealt with the personal appearance of Christ. What Stephen sees in Bloom is his "concealed identity" as "the traditional figure of hypostasis," that is, as Christ. Stephen has been able to recognize the Incarnation in the man who has, for no apparent reason, taken care of him when he needed much care. We recall Stephen's thoughts early in the day as he puzzled over the term *hypostasis*, which he associated with the Eucharist. What was mocked in the opening episode has come to pass in the last episode of action, the possibility of the human and the divine being joined. The timebound has, for a moment, been opened up to the timeless; as time continues, while still bound in time, Stephen recognizes, in Bloom's kindness, the silent eruption of the divine into the human world.

So when Stephen refuses Bloom's offer to stay the night and even live at 7 Eccles Street, we are not forced to conclude that this meeting has been uneventful. Quite the contrary: It's not every day one witnesses the Incarnation. We ought to emphasize instead Stephen's manner as he refuses the offer of asylum: "promptly, inexplicably, with amicability, gratefully it was declined" (17.955). We don't know why he refused, though we do know that Stephen values independence and freedom. But Stephen is grateful and amicable; he wants to make sure Bloom is not hurt. Other counterproposals are "advanced, accepted, modified, declined, restated in other terms,

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reaccepted, ratified, reconfirmed" (17.960–61), which should be enough to satisfy those who can only read on the literal level that their relationship most likely will continue. But for Stephen the miracle that was promised at the end of "Proteus" has occurred.

We have arrived at a crucial moment in the novel and in my argument, at one of the most prominent places in his text wherein Joyce teaches us to read the novel using the "allegory of theologians." For he loads their leave-taking with references that point us to Dante's own plan in writing his *Commedia*:[12]

> In what order of precedence, with what attendant ceremony was the exodus from the house of bondage to the wilderness of inhabitation effected?
>
> Lighted Candle in Stick
> borne by
> Bloom
> Diaconal hat on Ashplant
> borne by
> Stephen.
>
> With what intonation *secreto* of what commemorative psalm? The 113th, *modus peregrinus: In exitu Israel de Egypto: domus Jacob populo barbaro.* (171.1021–31)

We are not allowed to know what is on their minds as they perform this ritual; we do not know whose idea it was, why they do it, with what attitude they do it. We are blocked entirely from the naturalistic viewpoint that would render the scene with irony and reduce its importance, perhaps even puncture it. From our lofty vantage point, we see a ceremony performed, one that reenacts the exodus of the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt into the desert, where they are free to pursue their goal of reaching the promised land. Perhaps as a little joke, the two men make a ceremony of going out to Bloom's garden to urinate and then take leave of one another; but from the vantage point of the "Ithaca" narrator, they are leaving bondage and beginning (only beginning, after all these pages!) a wandering toward a promised land. A ritual is mocked on the opening pages of *Ulysses*, and another is presented immune from mockery at its climax.

The "intonation *secreto*" of the 113th psalm is used not merely to underscore the parallel between Bloom and Stephen on the one hand and the house of Jacob on the other; it is also used to bring us to Dante, who uses precisely this psalm in the second canto of *Purgatorio* and then cites it again in the famous letter to Can Grande in which he elaborates for his patron the method of allegory he uses in his great poem. As Charles Singleton was

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the first to note, by using an example from Holy Scriptures to explain how to read his poem, Dante was implying that the *Commedia* must be read using the "allegory of theologians" (see Singleton 66–75). For, according to this kind of allegory, the exodus of the house of Jacob from slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the desert is a historical event that actually took place but whose real or full significance arrives only with Christ, who redeems us from the slavery of sin and allows for us the freedom to choose that may result in our entering blessedness. It is extraordinarily perceptive of Joyce to have noted what Singleton established as the major principle of interpreting Dante. The reader is being given, through this scene, a signal from Joyce about what is going on here and throughout the novel, that the meaning of the novel must be read with the Incarnation as the pivot that gives order to the rest of the novel's occurrences. Stephen's recognition of Bloom as Christ-like in his behavior is the "center" that orders the rest of the novel.

It is important to emphasize this last point because good readers of *Ulysses* have made just the opposite point. Brook Thomas asserts quite boldly, "Each of the book's styles and points of view participates in [an] interaction, continually modifying one another. Thus, no one point of view is privileged" (50). I am arguing instead that "Ithaca" is the privileged perspective, that it contains what Thomas says the novel lacks, the "fixed perspective from which we can evaluate the action" (53). Joyce has ordered his novel according to the method of the "allegory of theologians," with the Christ event as the "fixed perspective" from which (to quote Freccero again) "the history of the world might be read and judged according to a meaning which perhaps even the participants in that history could not perceive" (133). Stephen's great achievement this day has been to recognize in this apparently ordinary man the Incarnation of Christian behavior, of which the man himself is unaware. This moment of recognition governs the meaning of the rest of the novel.

When Bloom and Stephen leave the house, they look up and see "[t]he heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit" (17.1039). The suddenness of this line is extraordinary: It is an eruption of poetry into the "cold bald" style of "Ithaca," and as such stands out from the rest of the episode. They are seen from the perspective of the stars, and are placed within this cosmic view in this lovely burst of poetry. The prose then goes on to place them in the vastness of space and the vastness of time in the episode's more usual scientific style. But here they are, finally having become what Joyce in his letter to Budgen said the style of "Ithaca" would make of them, "heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze."

But Bloom's day is not done, and his greatest act is left for us, not Stephen, to see, though we must be able to see Bloom as Stephen came to

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see him. Once alone, Bloom is described in terms that cannot refer to a human being but only to some object in the depths of space:

> Alone, what did Bloom feel?
>
> The cold of interstellar space, thousands of degrees below freezing point or the absolute zero of Fahrenheit, Centigrade, or Réaumur. . . . (17.1246–47)

Only a heavenly body can feel this kind of cold; the answer is meant, I think, to suggest a state of mind Bloom is trying to feel as he makes the return to Molly. That Bloom's hobby is astronomy is increasingly relevant to our understanding of his achievement and of the style that is used to describe it.[13] For Bloom's greatness lies in the detachment that he is able to achieve and that the style imitates, the distance both he and the "Ithaca" narrator are able to maintain, as he views himself and his problems. Feeling the cold of interstellar space, he begins the journey to Molly that ends his day, and the first thing that occurs tests the cool detachment he has tried to conjure: He bumps his head against the newly rearranged furniture. Having achieved the "cold of interstellar space," he now must try to maintain that detachment as he confronts various signs of Boylan's earlier presence.

We may still regret that we do not have the naturalistic narrator's lucid depiction of Bloom's consciousness as he makes his way upstairs, into the bedroom, and finally into bed; instead, we are given a scrupulously "objective" account of his entering the bed, one so externally precise that it almost ignores any sense of drama or tension:

> Bloom's acts?
>
> He deposited the articles of clothing on a chair, removed his remaining articles of clothing, took from beneath the bolster at the head of the bed a folded long white nightshirt, inserted his head and arms into the proper apertures of the nightshirt, removed a pillow from the head to the foot of the bed, prepared the bedlinen accordingly and entered the bed. (17.1208–13)

Bloom had been putting off just this moment all day long, wishing to defer the various troubling emotions—anger, shame, hurt, guilt—of an encounter with a wife who has been unfaithful. Yet all we are allowed to see is the act of entering the bed without any of the attendant emotions. Boom's detachment and extraordinary calm are even more sorely tested:

> What did his limbs, when gradually extended, encounter?

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> New clean bedlinen, additional odours, the presence of human form, female, hers, the imprint of a human form, male, not his, some crumbs, some flakes of potted meat, recooked, which he removed. (17.2122–25)

This is Bloom's extraordinary act, that he is able to remove the flakes of potted meat from the bed, lie down next to Molly, and kiss her good night in his usual way. His passivity, which earlier in the day may have seemed a sign of weakness, has been elevated to the heights of epic proportions: For what manner of man is this who can be so humble, so forgiving and so loving, as to brush from his bed the adulterer's crumbs and then engage in his usual relationship with a wife who was callous enough to leave the crumbs there to be seen? This is his triumphant act of Christian behavior, of forgiving and loving those who hurt us.

He was able to perform this extraordinary deed of forgiveness and charity by reflecting upon "the futility of triumph or protest or vindication: the inanity of extolled virtue: the lethargy of nescient matter: the apathy of the stars" (17.2224–26). For a man capable of such sublime indifference to earthly affairs, it is futile to protest or seek vengeance, and it is inane to preach or act self-righteously. Bloom is passive to an extraordinary degree, to the point that he wants to be as lethargic and ignorant as inert matter. But his passivity—which in "Calypso" was a weakness—is not in "Ithaca" a fault. It shines brilliantly, for it is the result of "the apathy of the stars." Such is a sublime apathy. The passivity that we may have deplored in the early episodes is worked upon—"reread"—until it becomes behavior emblematic of Christ. Bloom has indeed become like the stars at which he was gazing with Stephen, sublimely indifferent to the petty emotions that would paralyze and haunt the rest of us. He has indeed become a "light to the Gentiles," a shining example of Christian forgiveness and love. Joyce has been able to satisfy the demands of both naturalism and symbolism, discovering "the legitimate process from one world to another" in Dante's "allegory of theologians." We do not have to choose between the letter and the spirit, between the realistic and the symbolic, between the literal and the allegorical. The two are reconciled as the Word is made flesh, as Christian behavior is incarnate in the person of Leopold Bloom. Bloom remains perhaps the most complete and fully realized character in all literature and has also become, at one and the same time, an Incarnation of the Christian ideal.

Briefly, to conclude: Joyce has taken pains to ensure that we read his novel as a cohesive unity that has its center in "Ithaca," that home established by Stephen's (and through Stephen's, by the reader's) recognition of the mystery of the Incarnation. It seems a serious error of criticism to

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make Joyce into something he is not, a postmodernist who seeks to break down all unities and to debunk all the reader's efforts to discover a "master narrative" that provides cohesion to the many perspectives possible in presenting a man's life. He is instead a supreme example of high modernism, writing a kind of allegory able to overcome the strenuous demands of a mocking realism and establish a level of meaning that is still and fixed, permanent and, in the deepest sense, true.

NOTES

[1] Edmund Wilson and S. L. Goldberg both see the second half of *Ulysses* as a mistake. An illustrative quotation from each: "Joyce has here [in "Oxen of the Sun," "Eumaeus," and "Ithaca"] half-buried his story under the virtuosity of his technical devices" (Wilson 217); "it is a novel, and what is of permanent interest about it is what always interests us with the novel: its imaginative illumination of the moral—and ultimately, spiritual—experience of representative human beings" (Goldberg 30).

Stanley Sultan describes the basic trends in Joyce scholarship: *Ulysses* is "either a novel with ornamental complications, or a 'poem' (as some have called it) with a trivial action" (53). This critic argues impressively that one must choose between the two, but I hope that my application of the "allegory of theologians" will allow for the two trends to be reconciled.

[2] In *Four Quartets* Eliot also writes modernist allegory, as the special moments of one's experience are made the center of one's meditative life until they become significant of the central Christian mysteries of Annunciation, Incarnation, and Pentecost. That one's interior life can follow the structure of the Christ event is central to Dante's understanding of the "allegory of theologians," and organizes both Eliot's and Joyce's modernist masterworks.

[3] It is worth quoting at some length from the famous letter from Dante to his patron Can Grande:

> It is to be understood that the meaning of this work [the *Commedia*] is not simple, but rather it is polysemous, that is, having many meanings. For the first meaning is that which one derives from the letter, another is that which one derives from the things signified by the letter. The first is called 'literal' and the second 'allegorical' or 'mystical.' So that this method of exposition may be clearer, one may consider it in these lines: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary and Israel his dominion.'
> (cited in Musa 37)

Dante will include this psalm in his second canto of *Purgatorio*, at the beginning of his wandering in a desert land back home toward Eden. Joyce uses this psalm not only to set the scene for his protagonists' wandering in Bloom's garden but also to align his method with Dante's. I'll deal with this in the fourth section of this paper.

[4] Freccero's "retrospective illumination" reminds one of Tom Kernan's "retrospective arrangement," a phrase that is poked fun at several times through-

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out the day as an example of Kernan's pomposity. But this little joke at Kernan's expense contains an important clue about how we are to read *Ulysses*. That Joyce advances a serious point with a joke should come as no surprise to us any longer.

[5] See "Introduction" to Altieri's *Canons and Consequences*. In his illuminating responses to the tendencies of much of contemporary literary theory, Altieri advances ways of reading that are no longer naive about the issue of intention but that do not disregard it as irrelevant or unidentifiable. I want to place my argument alongside Altieri's as one that seeks to identify the author's intended way of our reading his text, a position particularly suited to a study of *Ulysses* since, as I will argue, Joyce includes this intention as part of his text in subtle but palpable ways.

[6] I mean to suggest, with my choice of phrases here, the theme of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, namely, the effort for the young Stephen to escape the various nets designed to constrict and imprison those souls born in Ireland. Each episode of *A Portrait* ends with a triumph of some sort, where Stephen feels elevated above his place and time, only to have the next episode take the triumph away by a reductive irony. For example, Stephen's triumph over Father Dolan is punctured when he hears, in chapter two, that the priests all had a good laugh over the affair; his great achievement in Nighttown with a prostitute is lost when the fear of sin and damnation strangles that freedom. The novel ends with Stephen's flight to Paris to become a great artist, and we know that this attempt also fails when we see him back in Dublin in the opening episodes of *Ulysses*. To face and overcome irony has been an ambition of Joyce's since "The Dead" and will be successfully accomplished in "Ithaca."

[7] This is how Wyndham Lewis in *Time and Western Man* characterizes the style of the entire novel, as "telling from the inside" and therefore "psychological" (107); for Lewis, *Ulysses* is written under "the intensive dictatorship of Space-time" (100). While only the opening episodes are accurately described in this way, Lewis nonetheless provides us with a wonderful angle from which to view the unfolding of the later episodes, as reacting against the tyrant of naturalism, Space-time (in a way I think Lewis would approve if he had seen it!) and establishing something more permanent and stable, out of the flux.

[8] Levenson is the first literary historian I know of to worry about "dating Hulme" (which is the title of his first of two chapters on Hulme). For the ideas Hulme advances in 1908 are significantly different from the ones advocated in 1914. "In five years," Levenson argues, "he has renounced virtually every major proposition to which he had given assent" (97). From an early advocacy of Bergson's philosophy and a belief that modern poetry ought to imitate impressionist painting, Hulme becomes a vigorous exponent of abstraction in art and hopes that the tendency toward abstraction seen in painters signals a return to the quest for permanence and absolute values that dominated the Middle Ages and that the Renaissance (as Quinones also argues) gave up on.

[9] In his scrupulous study of the process of Joyce's writing of *Ulysses*, Michael Groden asserts that "[o]f all the early episodes, "Aeolus" exhibits the most pronounced differences between the fair copy *Little Review* and the final versions." This reinforces my conviction that, as Joyce begins to rethink the purpose of *Ulysses* and the role the early episodes play in that purpose, "Aeolus" functions in a pivotal way, preparing us for the later, more elaborate developments: "The

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subheads shatter the comfortable uniformity of the early-stage episodes and they make the later developments much less surprising" (32).

[10] The last sentence of "Proteus" presents an "unnatural" ship: "Moving through the air high spars of threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship." A ship with its sails brailed up cannot move upstream, yet this one does. An episode entirely given over to naturalistic depiction of "stream of consciousness" ends with a ship moving against that stream in a way that defies nature.

We must recall also that Joyce decided to retain the word *crosstree* even after Budgen, who was a sailor, informed him that the proper word was *yard*. Joyce wanted *crosstree*, it seems reasonable to assume, for the suggestion of Christ's death on a tree made into a cross. The ship that defies nature at the end of "Proteus" is meant to suggest the Christ event, which also defies nature.

[11] In his retort to Deasy, Stephen is misquoting Isaiah, who actually says that God's chosen "will not cry out or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" (42. 2–3). Part of the plot of *Ulysses*, the part that pertains to Stephen, is to see if he can recognize the Incarnation not in a "shout in the street" but in the humble and quiet kindness of Bloom.

[12] Earlier in the episode we learn that Bloom and Stephen met twice before: "the first in the lilacgarden of Matthew Dillon's house," with Stephen's mother and Molly both present; the second in the "coffeeroom" of the Breslin hotel in the company of Simon Dedalus and Stephen's Uncle Charles, at which time Stephen invited Bloom to dinner, an invitation that Bloom was wise enough to decline with the same kind of grateful appreciation that Stephen uses to decline Bloom's offer of asylum on June 16, 1904. But we discover "a third connecting link between them" (17.477–78), that they both knew Mrs. Riordan, the Dante of *A Portrait*.

This fact allows us to say that Stephen and Bloom have Dante as a connecting link, a little joke that establishes the possibility that Dante's allegory provides the link between Stephen and Bloom, that the two figures come together as "father and son" in an allegory modeled on Dante's allegory of theologians.

[13] Hayman claims that "Ithaca" is in part "a projection of Bloom's scientific mentality" (103), an observation indicating that the cosmic detachment of the episode's style is earned by Bloom's lofty indifference.

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Remapping the Present: The Master Narrative of Modern Literary History and the Lost Forms of Twentieth-Century Fiction

Brian Richardson

For the most part, modern literary history—particularly the history of twentieth-century fiction—is regularly abbreviated to an all-too-simple tale of dynastic successions: Realism, the crowning achievement of nineteenth-century narrative, was supplanted by modernism, its inevitable successor, which, due to its own inherent limitations, in turn gave way to postmodernism. Despite our thoroughgoing suspicion of origins, we can assign plausible dates for the inauguration of each movement; more dialectically, we can point to the internal deviations and contradictions that mark the transformation from one movement to the other: Edwardian writers Ford, Conrad, and Forster, accompanied by the earlier D. H. Lawrence, provide the fulcrum that impels literature from one mode to the next. On the other end of modernism, Brian McHale has designated the very moments in Beckett's trilogy that demarcate the transition from modernism to postmodernism (*Postmodernist Fiction* 12–13).[1]

This narrative of modern literary history is not of course limited to British and Irish writers. In any number of national literatures, the individual names vary while the general pattern remains the same. Realists like the Goncourts, Tolstoy, Galdos, Mann, Tagore, and Tanizaki are succeeded by the modernists Proust, Biely, Cela, Broch, Rao, and Kawabata, who in their turn become displaced by the postmodernists Robbe-Grillet, Kundera, Rios, Grass, Rushdie, and Banana Yoshimoto. In what follows, I will focus my investigation on the British version of this suggested historical progression,

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though my critique is intended to be applicable on a much wider scale.[2] It might also be pointed out that the target of this paper is not so much actual histories of modern literature, a number of which pay close attention to their subject's nuances, as what I suggest is a near ubiquitous *idée reçu* that circulates unchallenged throughout the profession.[3]

The main problem with the standard narrative of modern literary history is precisely its narrative features: a distinct origin, a series of causally connected events in a linear sequence, a teleological progression culminating in the present, the absence of unconnected or distracting subplots, the unspoken but uncontested male domination of narrative agency, and the unproblematic closure implied by this version of history.[4] There is also the inevitable moral that this structure lends itself to, that postmodernism is a superior representation of human experience, more recent and therefore more appropriate, if not also more ideologically responsible.

Each of these aspects of the standard account of modern literary history derives more from the conventional structure of traditional narratives than from a careful assessment of the radical heterogeneity and "untimeliness" of twentieth-century literary practice.[5] A hard look at both the texts and the histories that purport to circumscribe them can quickly reveal just how misleading streamlined conceptions of literary history can be.

There is of course another master narrative of modern literary dealings that is even more stark, uncompromising, and relentlessly teleological than the one I have just outlined, and that is the history of modern critical theory. The irreversible sequence humanism > formalism > poststructuralism has become so entrenched as to be virtually unassailable, and this entrenchment probably seems so inevitable in part because of associations between each literary theory and a corresponding type of narrative practice. Humanism, perhaps most prestigiously in the form of Lukács's Marxist humanism, became the spokesman for and beneficiary of the achievements of the major texts of realism. Formalism, on the other hand, was to a large extent invented by the original practitioners of modernism (along with their early advocates) in order to explain its aims, aesthetics, and distinctive accomplishments. Postmodernism has in turn found a happy union with poststructuralism; it is no accident that Derrida valorizes authors like Blanchot and the *tel quel* novelists.

These narratives themselves merge into a larger cultural master text. Recent philosophers of art routinely use the term *neo-dada* to refer to many artistic productions since the 1960s in painting, music, and literature. It is nevertheless obvious why academic scholars of nontraditional literature since World War II prefer to use the different term *postmodernism* to describe the subject they pursue. Not only does the latter term sound more signifi-

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cant, exciting, au courant, mysterious, and fashionable—even at the expense of obscuring their subject's history and antecedents—it also fits quite nicely into the cultural imperative of "what is newer, is therefore better": a dictum that in advanced capitalist societies guides most advertising and production, whether of detergents, automobiles, or new members of the professoriat. (If you were a department chair, which position would you prefer to convince your dean to fund, neo-dada studies or postmodernism?) As Ihab Hassan has observed in this context, "there is a will to power in nomenclature, as well as in people or texts. A new term opens for its proponents a new space in language" (148).

This confluence of master narratives has a number of deleterious consequences. Unlike comparable histories of modern music, drama, or art, it leaves no place for the rich tradition of expressionist fiction.[6] It obscures the origins and antecedents of the type of fiction we now call postmodern. It tends to marginalize hybrid, idiosyncratic, and "minor" forms in its efforts to construct and maintain a totalizing narrative history, and then ignores the contributions that fail to fit the pattern. Just as expressionism remains a conspicuous absence in narrative history in part because it lacked a prestigious counterpart in critical theory, so has the impressive work of the Chicago school of criticism fallen back from the front lines of theory in part because it often focused on eighteenth-century fiction and seemed for some time to have little new to say about the more exciting developments of modern fiction—even as its theoretical range allowed it to transcend some of the self-imposed limitations of humanism, formalism, and poststructuralism.

I would like to offer an alternative model, focusing on the history of British fiction in the twentieth century. I will suggest that it can more accurately and effectively be viewed as the site of continuous contestation between at least four principal competing narrative poetics—realism, postmodernism, expressionism, and high modernism—each one stretching in fact from the beginning to the end of the century. (In addition, a fifth type, the romance, will be seen to be present at either end of the century.) Such a model not only allows us to retrieve otherwise lost narrative traditions and significant interweavings of different historical strands, it also invites us to look for previously unsought practitioners of the various types in each decade—an especially important act since, as we will see, it enables us to situate contemporary women realist writers as something other than a curious anachronism and leads as well to the partially female origins of "postmodernism" at the beginning of this century. British fiction has often been thought of as somewhat anomalous since modernism never fully displaced realism the way it did in France and much of the rest of the Conti-

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nent. But I will argue that this apparent oddity is instead a typical and even exemplary facet of the prolonged contention between rival narrative paradigms that regularly fail to die or be born "on time."

Of the four main poetics that persistently inform twentieth-century British fiction, realism and high modernism are the best known and least contested, though the period during which each is allowed to have flourished varies wildly from critic to critic, usually for fairly obvious reasons. I suggest instead that realism runs uninterruptedly from Arnold Bennett to Evelyn Waugh to Barbara Pym to Margaret Drabble to Helen Simpson. Similarly, high modernism should not be limited to the works of a handful of writers working between 1914 and 1939; instead, it stretches continuously from the last phase of Henry James to fiction of Elizabeth Bowen, Anthony Powell, and Elizabeth Howard to the latest novels of Graham Swift, Kazuo Ishiguro, and (if we are generous geographically) Nadine Gordimer.

That is, we may readily identify an unbroken succession of major authors animated by the basic compositional principles and techniques characteristic of high modernism. By this I mean innovative, complexly structured narratives that foreground their own composition by attenuating or ignoring the conventional methods of traditional prose fiction. Looking at paradigmatic examples of high modernism such as *Ulysses*, Proust's *Recherche, To the Lighthouse, The Sound and the Fury*, or *Molloy*, we observe how plotting ceases to be dramatic, characters are no longer stable subjects, the omniscient narrator is replaced by multiple or fallible ones, chronology is insistently nonlinear, closure becomes problematic, poetic description and symbolic figures abound (including self-referential images like the works of art in Proust), aesthetics supersedes reference, and the goal of creating an organic, artistic unity replaces that of depicting the structure of social relations. Woolf's essay "Modern Fiction" remains the *locus classicus* of this aesthetic. Rather more pithily, John Hawkes has this summary: "I began to write fiction on the assumption that the true enemies of the novel were plot, setting, character, and theme, and . . . totality of vision or structure was really all that remained" (149).

In Europe, the kind of literature now called postmodern was appearing simultaneously with or even preceding the major texts of modernism. Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1896) is as resolutely postmodern as anything written by Kathy Acker, and Gertrude Stein opens up narrative spaces that would later be occupied by writers like John Cage.[7] A number of works by Pirandello, Roussel, Witkiewicz, Bulgakov, and even Unamuno, if they had been written 50 to 80 years later, might be hailed as the latest wave of a new postmodern avant-garde. In these works, the alternative patternings invented by high modernists were rejected, as all orders or boundaries,

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whether traditional or original, became suspect. The resurgence of aleatory writing practices in the 1970s openly acknowledged its surrealist inheritance, and plays like Stoppard's *Travesties* and *Artist Descending a Staircase* further demarcate a dada-pomo continuum.[8] Early specimens of British postmodernism should include rather obviously Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and, perhaps only slightly less obviously, Ronald Firbank's novellas, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and Malcolm Lowry's *Through the Panama*.[9] These works all possess the ontological instability that McHale argues (correctly, I believe) to be the dominant characteristic of postmodernist fiction, and contain as well the emphases on parody, reflexivity, textuality, artifice, transgression, hybridization, and a conflation of history and fiction that other theorists have suggested are central to the postmodern aesthetic.

At this point, one is tempted to reconsider the literary historical positioning of the work of Dorothy Richardson, whose multivolume novel *Pilgrimage* has generally eluded conventional histories. And there are good reasons why this has been the case. She considered her work to be realistic, but with a difference—specifically, as "a feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism" (9). With a single focalizer whose thoughts and perceptions we are continuously informed of, the work has seemed too insistently subjective to reside under the rubric of realism. On the other hand, its resistance to formal pattern made it anathema to the more severe modernists. Virginia Woolf was disappointed by the insufficient "unity, significance, or design" of *The Tunnel* (190). Katherine Mansfield, in a review of *The Tunnel* and *Interim*, objected to the novels' refusal to foreground or hierarchize. These are books devoid of what Jakobson would call "the dominant"; each event, she complains, is equally important as every other event. "[U]ntil these things are judged and given each its appointed place in the whole scheme, they have no meaning in the world of art" she pronounced (cit. in Scott 309–10). It is of course exactly these qualities, along with an indifference to the claims of art, that typifies much postmodern practice. Ironically, if someone were now to write, word for word, Richardson's novels, she would probably find a very different reception than the dismissal that was accorded to Borges's Pierre Menard. Instead of languishing within a polite though confused indifference, such writing might well be praised for its resistance to the modernist fetish for form. It might even be considered the cutting edge of postmodernism, a super- or photorealism that is all the more realistic for its abjuration of modernist compositional symmetries. Woolf observed that "there is no word, such as romance or realism, to cover even roughly the works of Miss Dorothy Richardson. Their chief characteristic . . . is one for which we still seek a name" (191). We may now attempt to utter

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that name, the ugly-sounding but uncannily accurate name of "proto-postmodernism."

Expressionism is an indispensable category in the history of virtually every twentieth-century cultural medium other than the novel—an anomaly that so far has occasioned surprisingly little comment.[10] We speak comfortably and accurately of expressionist painting, music, drama, sculpture, dance, film, poetry, and even architecture. In the case of fiction, the tendency has been to lump all prewar non- or antirealist aesthetics together under the bulky rubric of modernism. This practice helps to explain why modernism is notoriously difficult to define and, more importantly, obscures the radical differences between rival literary programs that had little or nothing in common other than their rejection of the conventions of realism. Expressionism can be roughly defined as a systematically skewed mode of narrative representation, in which resolutely subjective and emotionally charged perceptions distort or replace familiar, standardized patterns of experience.[11] As Peter Nicholls states, "the Expressionists were interested in arriving at unfamiliar images of the world through calculated modes of distortion," and their "emphasis was always on an intensity of perception secured by infusing the world with violent emotion" (142). Unlike realism, which purports to reproduce typical features of the social world (or high modernism, which reassembles these features into alternative aesthetic designs), expressionist fiction seeks to reproduce emotionally extreme or dreamlike sequences and events, as the typical, routine, and the conventional are supplanted by the oneiric, the hallucinatory, and the archetypical.

For an example of expressionist prose we may turn to May Sinclair's undervalued 1919 novel *Mary Olivier*:

> Tip-fingering backwards that way you got into the grey lane where the prickly stones were and the hedge of the little biting trees. When the door in the hedge opened you saw the man in the night-shirt. He had only half a face. From his nose and his cheek-bones downwards his beard hung straight like a dark cloth. You opened your mouth but before you could scream you were back in the cot; the room was light; the green knob winked and grinned at you from the railing. . . . (3–4)

This passage (which incidentally contains one of the earliest specimens of second-person narration) reproduces the confused perceptions of a very small girl with a weak understanding of causality. After moving open the illustrated curtain in front of her cot, the child sees a frightening face in profile, apparently that of her father—though it just might be a two-dimensional image. Her field of vision then changes, and as new images appear

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the older ones are forgotten. By faithfully transcribing the girl's misperceptions, Sinclair recreates a series of emotionally charged, subjective distortions of diurnal experiences that are simultaneously unmediated and distancing, experimental and realistic, bizarre and strangely familiar.

We may better appreciate the expressionist difference by contrasting it to other types of antirealist writing. There is a world of difference between Proust's Marcel tasting his madeleine and Celine's Bardamu struggling and cursing through several continents, or the characters plotting against their author in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The postmodern continuum from Gertrude Stein and Tristan Tzara to John Cage and Kathy Acker strives to collapse, violate, or deny all orders, patterns, oppositions, and hierarchies. The high modernists from James to Figes construct elaborate aesthetic unities out of the detritus of modern bourgeois existence in direct opposition to the predictable ordering patterns of natural narrative, as universal demands for plot, character, moral, and a definitive closure are provocatively replaced by exclusively aesthetic orderings, parallel figures, amoral motifs, and thematic resolutions that generally leave the characters' lives uncomfortably *in medias res*. Expressionism by contrast follows the stark logic of the emotions; its pattern is both as familiar and as unpredictable as a nightmare. Its ordering principle is primal and mythic. Instead of the geometrical symmetries of high modernism, it prefers the vicious circles of obsession and repetition.

Concerning innovations in narrative temporality, long considered a defining feature of the modern, we see three different nonrealist strategies at work. Realism, it will be observed, is largely (but only largely) linear, with frequent flashbacks, occasional foreshadowings, and numerous pauses while simultaneous events are sequentially narrated. In high modernism, an alternative chronology of presentation tends to overwhelm the mere temporal succession of events. In such texts we find the greatest degree of opposition between *fabula* and *syuzhet* or *histoire* and *récit*—terms formulated to explain this distinctive practice of the high modernists. By contrast, postmodernism collapses, ignores, or destroys temporality; in the superb phrase of Diane Elam, "postmodernism is the recognition of the specifically *temporal* irony within narrative" ("Postmodern Romance," 217). We see this difference clearly expressed in Robbe-Grillet's remarks on the self-contradictory chronology of *La Jalousy*:

> it was absurd to suppose that in the novel . . . there existed a clear and unambiguous order of events, one which was not that of the sentences of the book, as if I had diverted myself by mixing up a pre-established calendar the way one shuffles a deck of cards. The

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> narrative was on the contrary made in such a way that any attempt to reconstruct an external chronology would lead, sooner or later, to a series of contradictions, hence to an impasse. (154)

Robbe-Grillet's novel is not, that is, constructed like *The Sound and the Fury* (which includes just such a reassembled chronology of its *fabula* in an appendix), and cannot be recuperated by the methods necessary for interpreting the story of the Compsons—such an approach is in fact designed to lead a critical impasse.

The temporality of expressionist fiction, on the other hand, is usually both relentlessly linear and deliberately vague. Measurable chronometric units, whether minutes, weeks, or years, are rarely mentioned. These are replaced by more primal indicators such as light and darkness or heat and cold that serve to reflect the protagonist's subjectivity and reveal its dislocations. Furthermore, the protagonists of such works rarely have much of a personal history antecedent to the events recounted on the book's first page; their lives are rather coextensive with the narratives told about them.

The list of international novelists whose works may be effectively described as expressionist is substantial: Hamsun, Kafka, Celine, Canetti, Cela, Lagerkvist, Djuna Barnes, Ralph Ellison, Juan Rulfo, Maurice Blanchot, Ernesto Sabato, and Bessie Head are among the most obvious names. The number of British works that ask for the same appellation is equally impressive: Wyndham Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars*, Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight*, Charles Williams's *Descent into Hell*, Anna Kavan's *Asylum Piece*, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, some of Beckett's stories from the 1950s ("The Expelled," "The End"), Nicholas Mosley's *Accident*, Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers*, Martin Amis's *Other People*, and much of Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*. It is time that this movement, which is perhaps stronger now among British writers that at any earlier period, is finally acknowledged and given the recognition it deserves.

Contemporary British fiction has also seen the revival of an older, often maligned form of fiction: the romance. David Lodge's *Small World*, Angela Carter's *Wise Children*, and A. S. Byatt's *Possession* are typical but by no means isolated examples of the return of the romance, albeit with a postmodern inflection.[12] According to the lines of analysis that inform this study, we should be surprised if we are unable to uncover a hidden genealogy, however intermittent or obscured. Indeed, we can find a convenient point of departure in the works of Robert Louis Stevenson, followed by the experiments of Conrad, Ford, and W. H. Hudson with a more cynical, realistic, and unpredictable kind of romance. But here the trail seems to end—at least concerning "literary" fiction.

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The romance goes underground for much of the twentieth century, residing in low-brow costume gothics, in addition to, as Pamela A. Fox has recently documented, working-class romances that can function as complex political narratives that contest hegemonic conventions.[13] This state of affairs is mulled over by the narrator of Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976), who is a writer of the Harlequin-type romances condemned by her socialist husband, Arthur:

> The truth was that I dealt in hope, I offered a vision of a better world, however preposterous. Was that so terrible? I couldn't see that it was much different from the visions Arthur and his friends offered, and it was just as realistic. So you're interested in the people, the workers, I would say to him during my solitary midnight justifications. Well that's what the people and the workers read, the female ones anyway, when they have time to read at all and they can't face the social realism of *True Confessions*. They read my books. Figure that out. (35)

This passage points to some of the reasons for romance's long eclipse as well as for its enduring appeal. Whenever a realist aesthetic predominates, the romance is necessarily devalued (realism, from Cervantes to Flaubert, defines itself as the negation of the romance). However, it is precisely its nonrealistic, utopian invention of a superior, more-fluid society that has been, since its origin in Hellenistic Greece, the romance's most desired effect.[14]

By looking at modern literary history as a testing site or battleground where several continuous, competing poetics struggle for supremacy, we can better appreciate otherwise inexplicable aesthetic shifts and curiously retrograde motions, as well as recognize historical false starts and dead ends. Christopher Isherwood's transition from high modernism to realism, like Iris Murdoch's comparable progression a generation later, should not seem any more unusual than the opposite shift that occurs in the novels of Angus Wilson.[15] We can better understand how Woolf is able to sandwich her postmodern *Orlando* between the high modernist *To the Lighthouse* and the ultramodernist *The Waves*. Similarly, one could read some prominent contemporary works (John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Muriel Spark's *Not to Disturb*, Fay Weldon's *The Cloning of Joanna May*, Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, Lawrence Norfolk's *Lempriere's Dictionary*) as ingenious attempts to conjoin the otherwise opposed poetics of realism and postmodernism. Indeed, the creation of such a "postmodern realism" may turn out to be a substantial and distinctively British contribution to the development of fiction.

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This perspective also encourages a fuller appreciation of interesting subgenres that may have been created in part to fuse the strengths and avoid the limitations of existing narrative models. A ready example is the so-called "dialogue novel," reinvented in the twentieth century by Ivy Compton-Burnett and later developed by Henry Green, which combines the concerns of realism with the technical experiments of modernism. These texts, it might be added, go far beyond the conversational "drawing room novels" of Norman Douglas or the early Aldous Huxley, and point instead toward the more radical deployments of dialogue in Leduc, Duras, and Sarraute.[16]

We are also able to identify abandoned traditions. I am thinking here in particular of the subgenre of the "intellectual fable" that enjoyed a certain vogue in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. This cluster includes well-known works like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and James's "The Jolly Corner," as well as the less-well-remembered supernatural allegories of Kipling, Chesterton (*The Man Who was Thursday*), and Vita Sackville-West's "Seducers in Ecuador." This kind of narrative, which directly descends from the *conte philosophique* of writers like Voltaire, does not seem to have engendered any identifiable progeny in Britain, though it certainly provided inspiration to three authors who straddle the modernist/postmodern divide: Borges, Nabokov, and Calvino. In all probability, future British followers of these three fabulators will bring this lost mode back to Albion—unless, of course, the process has already begun. A. S. Byatt's *Angels and Insects* (1992) may just be the latest work in a newly reconstructed tradition, one that makes us scrutinize the recent past again and find, unexpectedly, a new predecessor—the early Iris Murdoch.

The revisionary map of modern literature I have set forth will no doubt fail to please many working scholars. This is not only because it upsets the agreed-upon if dubious historical sequences currently in favor, but also because it presupposes a kind of parity between antithetical and competing aesthetic programs that were designed to critique and supplant each other. There are few people equally open to traditional rivals like romance and realism, modernism and postmodernism, realism and modernism. Being a modernist nearly always implied having a healthy contempt for romance and realism. No one is startled by the fact that Joyce was dismissive of the works of Zola, Tzara, and Walter Scott, though many are surprised to learn of Kafka's affection for Dickens or Butor's praise of Balzac—precisely because these affiliations transgress more customary parameters. Such is the oppositional nature of many of these programs that it is perhaps only now,

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in the final years of the twentieth century, that we are able to imagine such a catholic position.

The most serious objection to the account presented here is that it contests part of the very foundation of literary history as it is usually conceived. As David Perkins notes, the concept of literary history has been based on the premises that "literary works are formed by their historical context; [and] that change in literature takes place developmentally . . . " (1). The more enduring a mode is, the more resistant it is to the vagaries of history. If postmodernism has been around since at least the 1890s, then it cannot simply be a reflection, image, or embodiment of the postindustrial world that only recently came into being—though its current popularity (and its rather sudden narratability) are surely rooted in a particular historical moment.[17] If the model I am proposing is accurate, claims concerning literature's historical grounding may have to be refined or scaled back. Instead of explaining literature, in the last analysis, by history, or subsuming literary discourse within the matrix of contemporary social discourses, we need to examine as well the transgenerational compositional forms that persist over decades, centuries, and even millennia. In short, the requirements of literary history must be mediated by the equally pressing claims of the history of literature.

Other consequences of utilizing this perspective are potentially far reaching. First, it denies the long-established but internally contradictory category of the modern, insisting instead on a plurality of distinct and incompatible antirealist poetics. In particular, it calls for an archeology of postmodernism that restores its history and names its many female progenitors. Contemporary practitioners of realism should no longer be perceived as unusual atavisms; this is especially true of female authors seeking a wide audience for revolutionary views. As Gayle Greene reminds us, "[a]ccessibility is a sine qua non for any writing concerned with social change, which is why realism is the mode of feminist writers—as it has been the mode of women writers in the past" (3–4). It is equally important that other, contestatory modernisms are able to be accommodated. As Carlos J. Alonso affirms, "both literature and cultural discourse in Spanish America exist as a simultaneous rejection and affirmation of the modern"; that is, its "cultural rhetoric proceeds from its identification with modernity to a surreptitious turning away from it" (232).[18] In addition, Third World and postcolonial literatures should not be judged against a "progressive" trajectory of narrative forms that turns out to be a fabrication.[19] Salman Rushdie's postmodernism is not more advanced or developed than the modernism of Anita Desai and Michelle Cliff, the expressionism of Bessie Head, or the realism of Chinua Achebe or Ama Ata Aidoo. These authors, like their coun-

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terparts born in the developed nations, have selected the narrative strategies they prefer for a number of reasons, but not because they were too remote from the Western engines of literary progress.[20]

We might expect to see the debates over postmodernism covering new ground, and diverse varieties of postmodern fiction differentiated. One distinction that immediately suggests itself is that between an "ontological" type in which different orders of reality are collapsed (e.g., Snow White confronts Richard Nixon) and a "hermeneutical" kind that plays at the edges of intelligibility (Stein, Cage). We might see a much more plausible, complete, and comprehensive history of postmodernism (which might be renamed, more precisely if less elegantly, "avant-postmodernism"), rather than accounts that offer rather arbitrary origins along with an extensive list of significant precursors. Whether the "postmodern" in postmodern fiction is the same as that in postmodern architecture or music should also be scrutinized. New studies on contemporary neomodernism, the history of expressionist fiction, and twentieth-century romance can be expected as well.[21]

In general, the history of literature needs to be studied more scrupulously and theorized more effectively. We need to determine which texts are after all the significant precursors of the poetics that stretch back at least to the nineteenth century, and perhaps even earlier. Two interesting historical conjunctions present themselves at this point. Though this essay has consistently emphasized continuities that cut across periods and contested a number of attempts at fixing origins, it remains the case that if one were pressed to name works in which the newer aesthetics first appeared in full form, one might plausibly offer three texts, written a few years apart, immediately following the apogee of naturalism: the expressionist *Hunger* (1890), Jarry's postmodern *Ubu Roi* (1896), and James's high modernist *The Sacred Fount* (1901) or *The Wings of the Dove* (1902).[22] More intriguingly, I suspect a good case could be made for prototypical examples of major modern types in these eighteenth-century novels: Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (high modernism), Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* (postmodernism), and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (expressionism).[23] The deeper question it would seem is why these forms begin to appear at the birth of romanticism.[24] It may be time to reconsider, once again, the notion of a romantic–modern continuum that has been put forth by a number of disparate scholars including de Man, Bloom, Josipovici, and Perry Meisel. It is doubtless also time to apply greater skepticism to the increasingly frequent claims of yet another paradigm shift.

All this is in part a rather roundabout way of saying that we must think hard about the emerging canon of British literature after World War II that our critical writings are now helping to construct. If indeed postmodernism

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has long been merely one of several prominent narrative modes, then we should be careful not to overvalue its more recent specimens and, more importantly, to reassess superior authors working in less-attention-getting or reemergent forms.

We might begin our reassessment by attempting to reconfigure the international traditions evoked in the second paragraph of this essay. In narratives written in German in the 1920s, we find the realism of the brothers Mann, the high modernism of Broch and Musil, the expressionism of Kafka and Benn, and the early postmodernism of Yvan Goll. In Britain one observes, in or around 1939, major works of realism by Graham Greene, modernism by Elizabeth Bowen, expressionism by Jean Rhys, and postmodernism by Flann O'Brien. The same cluster recurs in France in the years following the end of World War II: Now the apposite figures are Sartre, Sarraute, Celine, and Queneau. Latin American novelists writing from the late 1950s to the mid-70s are often lumped together under the mildly exotic rubric of magic realism. The alternative map I am offering here will enable us to differentiate between Onetti's realistic work, the high modernism of Carpentier, Sabato's expressionism, and the postmodernism of Cabrera Infante. Many other comparable groupings suggest themselves, which readers will be able to identify. I will limit myself to drawing attention to just one more: Among contemporary writers born in India, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Sunetra Gupta, and Salman Rushdie work respectively within the four poetics. Admittedly, not all of these authors are as well known (or well placed) as those who fit more nicely within the reigning paradigm. Nevertheless, it is instructive to discern just what may be found when one is determined to look from a different perspective.

I am well aware that my account of twentieth-century narrative does not itself make a very good story. There are more characters than can be conveniently managed in the space allowed, and some of the outlines may appear a bit fuzzy. The settings will be thought by some to be too malleable, and the near-endless proliferation of dubiously connected subplots will annoy still others. There is no closure, no teleology, no forecasting the future, and no riding the crest of the wave of the future. It is not even exclusionary; there are still other types that might plausibly be added (one could easily imagine a strong case being made for a distinct postcolonial poetics),[25] and naturally there are still other stories that could be told about the texts conglomerated above.

One particularly seductive tale that cuts across the categories I have carefully tried to distinguish is what may be called the *écriture féminine* story. This account would originate with Dorothy Richardson's attempt to create a distinctive female style that more effectively represents female experience; con-

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tinue through Woolf, Sinclair, Rhys, Mansfield (according to Kaplan), and Joyce (according to Cixous); and culminate perhaps in the writings of Angela Carter, Christine Brooke-Rose, and Jeanette Winterson. Such a construction, clearly possessing explanatory value and revealing important lines of affiliation, ultimately serves to show yet again the importance of, if not creating one's precursors, at least imagining alternative ones[26]—or better yet, the need to replace storytelling, which always tends to reduce complexity, with the notion of mapping, which can simultaneously demarcate any number of features, especially if multiple transparencies are superimposed on each other.

To conclude, I feel that the standard master narrative of modern literary history is so limited and so flawed that it should be extensively augmented or abandoned altogether as an explanatory construct. Twentieth-century narrative is too diverse, multiform, and overdetermined to be reduced to a simple formula within a chronological sequence. The realism/modernism/postmodernism progression simply does not correctly describe literary practice in this century. A more accurate, rhizomatic model shows instead five distinct, significant narrative poetics—realism, postmodernism, high modernism, expressionism, and romance—that continuously fluctuate, battle against, merge with, and interanimate each other dialogically every decade.

The urge toward teleology, one that cannot be resisted by literary polemicists and authors of manifestoes, must be regularly contested by literary historians. No one believes anymore that science steadily progresses toward an unchanging goal, or that historical events can adequately be contained within the form of a single linear narrative. Why then would we ever assume that comparable narrative structures are able to embrace modern literature or critical theory? The rich mass of narrative fiction of this century demands a more capacious, flexible, and open-ended account. I hope the model I have presented here suggests a more useful and accurate—if also necessarily provisional—way of conceptualizing it in all its messy heterogeneity.

NOTES

[1] I do not mean to denigrate McHale's admirable analysis but rather to complain about its unidirectionality. His account of Beckett's transition to postmodernism is wonderful, but he does not attempt to describe Beckett's subsequent return to modernism in *Company* (1980). In his more recent *Constructing Postmodernism,* McHale acknowledges that Christine Brooke-Rose's alternating use of modernist and postmodern poetics compels us to see the two as "equally 'innovative' or 'advanced' alternatives which our historical situation

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makes available to contemporary writers" (12). Nevertheless, he continues to describe "the successive phases in the development of the poetics of the novel" as "realist, modernist, (perhaps) postmodernist" (188).

[2] I should also add that my primary focus is narrative fiction, though most of my claims apply with equal force to drama, and many can be predicated of poetry, particularly in its narrative and dramatic forms. Lyric poetry oftentimes seems to be a rather different beast, and is most effectively analyzed on its own terms.

[3] Most historical accounts nevertheless project a teleological pattern, and a large number reinscribe the progression outlined above, often in an abbreviated, binary form. A laudable exception is Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity*; another, more recent is Peter Nicholls's *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*, which was written to contest recent accounts that provide a simplistic, caricatured version of modernism (vii).

[4] Among the recent works that attempt to recover modernism's female origins are Sidney Janet Kaplan's *Katherine Mansfield and the Origins of Modernist Fiction*, and *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott. One of the goals of my essay is to add to this important project of recovering forgotten or suppressed women writers and to suggest alternative configurations that will more accurately reflect women's contributions.

[5] For an excellent general discussion of the relation between narrative form and the writing of literary history, see David Perkins, esp. 29–51.

[6] There may also be at the university level additional, pedagogical problems. Much expressionist fiction can be said to suffer from a paucity of ambiguity; the subjective distortions and emotional extremities of its protagonists are usually quite obvious. Often, there is rather little to explain or interpret, though there is a great deal to admire.

[7] I am attempting to adapt and expand Marjorie Perloff's important distinction between the high modernist tradition that includes Mallarmé, Yeats, Eliot, Stevens, and Berryman and a different poetics, grounded in undecidability, present in Rimbaud, "Gertrude Stein, in Pound and Williams, as well as in the short prose of Beckett's later years, an undecidability that has become more marked in the poetry of the last decades" (Perloff, *Poetics* 4). For a more recent statement of her position, see Perloff's *The Futurist Moment*. On Stein as an early postmodernist, see Ellen E. Berry's impressive study.

[8] As Calinescu observes, "Taking the term avant-garde in its Continental acceptation, we can argue that what [Ihab] Hassan calls postmodernism is mostly an extension and diversification of the pre-World War II avant-garde" (142–43). Similarly, David Galef, in an article interrogating the modernist-postmodern divide, observes that many of the defining "stylistic traits antedate the eras with which they are most closely associated, making for a confused etiology and a difficult diachronic analysis" (83). He goes on to note that, "in a curious historical inversion, Dadaism antedates Surrealism and so reverses the modernist-postmodernist slide" (86). Finally, Szegedy-Maszak offers what is perhaps the most compelling evidence for the claim that "it is almost impossible to draw the line between [postmodernism] and its antecedents" (42).

[9] For engaging speculations on postmodernism *avant la lettre*, see *Postmodernism Across the Ages*, eds. Bill Readings and Bennet Schaber. Gregory W. Bredbick's piece, "The Postmodernist and the Homosexual" (254–59), which

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argues that "postmodernism is *always already* homosexual" (255), is especially useful for thinking about Firbank. On this topic, see also the essays in Laura Doan's stimulating anthology, *The Lesbian Postmodern.*

[10] One of the only sustained accounts of this work is Sherrill E. Grace's excellent *Regression and Apocalypse.*

[11] This definition elaborates on Peter Szondi's description of the stylistic principle of expressionism as "the 'subjective distortion' of the objective" (64). This general position is discussed by Grace 20–22. One might further differentiate between a "standard" and a more "radical" type of expressionism. The former, as we will see shortly, invites the reader to determine in large part the actual experience that is being distorted. The other follows more the logic of dreams (e.g., Kafka), and is not reducible to an event and its misprision. Naturally, many expressionist authors move continuously between these two poles (Celine, Blanchot).

[12] For an insightful overview of this phenomenon, see Diane Elam, *Romancing the Postmodern,* esp. 1–25.

[13] See Pamela A. Fox's article "The 'Revolt of the Gentle.'" The standard work on the modern, low-brow gothic romance is Janice A. Radway's *Reading the Romance.* For an excellent account of key moments in the historical trajectory of the romance in Western literature, see Patricia Parker's *Inescapable Romance.*

[14] This relation is most fully and cunningly explored by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious.*

[15] For a perceptive, concise account of the development of Isherwood's fiction, see Randall Stevenson 201–03. A. S. Byatt provides an astute survey of the opposite transformations of Murdoch and Wilson in her essay "People in Paper Houses: Attitudes to 'Realism' and 'Experiment' in English Post-war Fiction" (147–68).

[16] For an impressive overview of specifically female experiments with dialogue fiction, see Janice Berkowitz Gross's "A Telling Side of Narration."

[17] Robert Rawdon Wilson has recently distinguished between theories that use postmodernism to designate a historical period (Jameson, Lyotard, Eagleton) and those that use the term to indicate a particular aesthetic, genre, or style (Hassan, Hutcheon, Thiher). I suspect that the gap between these two postmodernisms may turn out to be too vast to be bridged. Indeed, many theorists insist that the notion of a distinct postindustrial society has yet to be conclusively demonstrated; see Peter Burger on this point (32–47).

[18] Simon Gikandi has made similar claims for Caribbean literature. He states that because "modernity and modernism pose a set of questions different from that raised in an Anglo-American context," Caribbean "literature is both haunted and sustained by modernism and modernity" (4).

[19] For a sustained critique of the distortions that this master narrative, in the hands of Fredric Jameson, imposes on the history of modern Chinese literature, see Rey Chow.

[20] For a powerful African-American response to constructions of modernism by one who fails to share the modernists' "fawning reliance on an array of images and assumptions bequeathed by a *civilization* that, in its prototypical form, is exclusively Western, preeminently bourgeois, and optically white" (6), see Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance.*

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[21] For a vivid attempt to analyze modernism beyond its customary parameters, see Morton P. Levitt's *Modernist Survivors.*

[22] Many might wish to move the first example of high modernism forward to Joyce or back to Flaubert (or even Mérimée). I select the later James because it is here that formal concerns supersede (and not merely accompany) those of the representational practices of realism. I fully appreciate the complexities of establishing such a point of origin, and wish that comparable investigation was routinely given to the other aesthetics.

[23] One can furthermore trace the most thorough genealogy for the most neglected type: expressionism. Working backward from Kafka and Benn, we can find Rilke's *Malte Laurids Brigge,* Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Flaubert's *Temptation of St. Anthony,* Lautréamont's *Maldoror,* Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground,* Nerval's *Sylvie,* Gogol's "Diary of a Madman," Buchner's *Woyzek,* numerous tales of Poe and Hoffmann, and Blake's "The Mental Traveler." Other romantic instances of postmodern practices include Ludwig Tieck's play *Puss in Boots,* and Charles Nodier's rather Barthelme-like fairy tales. See also Charles Caramello's discussion of *Moby Dick,* "the great American precursor of postmodern American fiction" (54), in his book *Silverless Mirrors* (54–93).

[24] On the Romantic origins of key aesthetic concepts employed by postmodern writers, see Waugh 19–24.

[25] Such a category would raise a number of potentially difficult issues, since in many cases it would augment rather than replace the aesthetic programs already in play. That is, we would find postcolonial and non-postcolonial examples of realism, postmodernism, etc. At the same time, it is unlikely that all writers from countries that recently gained independence share a common aesthetic. It is not clear to me that Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* or most of Naipaul's novels have the oppositional poetics more obviously present in other Indian and Indian diasporic authors, from Bankimchandra Chatterjee to Raja Rao to Salman Rushdie. To lump them all together in a single, rigid poetics is, as Jameson was bluntly informed, to do violence to them. Finally, we might also observe that *Ulysses,* the canonical text of high modernism, is also arguably a foundational anticolonial narrative. For these reasons I have finally chosen not to include the postcolonial as a separate type in this analysis.

[26] Such a construction would nevertheless need to address the concerns raised by various commentators on *écriture féminine,* the most pressing of which are set forth in Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (19–50).

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D. H. Lawrence's "Dark Page": Narrative Primitivism in *Women in Love* and *The Plumed Serpent*

Brett Neilson

> Now the bright page was turned, and the dark page lay before her. How could one write on a page so profoundly black?
>
> —*The Plumed Serpent* (51)

According to Tzvetan Todorov, there is no such thing as "primitive narrative": "[n]o narrative is natural; a choice and construction will always preside over its appearance; narrative is a discourse, not a series of events" (55). This is narratology's most basic premise, but it has a special relevance for my topic in this paper—that is, how modernist attempts to represent the primitive in narrative disable the critique of Western modernity that so often accompanies them. Focusing on two texts from D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* and *The Plumed Serpent*, I argue that they deploy a strategy that I call "narrative primitivism." By this I mean that they imagine the primitive as a nonnarratable quality, which returns to destabilize their progressive time schemes. By exploring the complicity of these narrative techniques with atemporal/ahistorical notions of the primitive, I contrast Lawrence's critique of the Enlightenment values of instrumentality and reason with recent theories of postcoloniality, defined loosely as the "failure of decolonization."[1] In particular, I compare Lawrence's ideas about nationalism, race, and gender to the present-day theories of Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha, arguing that he cannot imagine a form of hybridity that articulates difference outside a dynastic class hierarchy. Ultimately, Lawrence's critique of modernity refashions the ethnocentric myth of cultural progres-

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sion as a logic of restitution, leaving undisturbed the temporal model that makes it possible to understand the primitive as a fiction of lost origins.

The primitive is a disputed category, and its use to describe traditional cultures such as those of precolonial Mexico is highly doubtful. Anthropologists have avoided its implications of temporal priority by preferring the word *archaic*, but Lawrence uses the term to describe much more than indigenous and non-Western cultures. In her *Gone Primitive*, Mariana Torgovnick has charted his use of the word, cataloging the various states and entities it signifies throughout his novels (159). Including "working-class men," "phallic power," and "natural harmony (attunement with the sun)," her list is sufficiently heterogeneous to show that the Lawrentian primitive furnishes no consistent political or anthropological thematic. Yet she finds Lawrence's divergent attitudes toward the idea to display a fundamental shift in his work, from a feminine, degenerative primitive in *Women in Love* (a feature the book shares with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) to a masculine, regenerative version in *The Plumed Serpent*. This regendering of the primitive is undoubtedly a feature of Lawrence's ouevre, but, as the transformation itself suggests, such identifications are never internally stable. Building on Torgovnick's argument, I want to show that this negotiability of gender in the Lawrentian primitive unsettles the heterosexual logic by which identification and desire are mutually exclusive. For Lawrence, the primitive is a dense site of significations that allows the coexistence of hetero- and homosexual modes of desire. Thus, the novels that grapple with this theme frequently contain episodes that interrogate their own adherence to a narrative logic empowered by heterosexual relations of displacement and rivalry.

Women in Love is a case in point. Consider the discussion that follows the famous man-to-man tussle in the chapter entitled "Gladiatorial." Hoping to evade the "clutching" bonds of Ursula and accede to an impersonal, nongenital state of union with Gerald, Birkin declares "Life has all kinds of things. . . . There isn't only one road" (276). The trope implies the possibility of an escape from the naturalized imperative of heterosexual commitment that Lawrence, in a contemporaneous essay, associates with an "endless continuing in the same sort, endless traveling in one direction" ("Love" 25). But the novel's end proves otherwise. Gerald dies amid an alpine blizzard, and Birkin remains subject to the "endless traveling" of heterosexual commitment. As Ursula says, his ideal of "eternal union with a man" is a "theory" (481), and as such it expresses only dissatisfaction with the unidirectionality of "love," whether hetero- or homosexual in orientation. Despite his final words of incredulity, Birkin cannot escape the novel's icy

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dénouement or reverse the sequential passage of its plot. Like the story that contains him, he can go only one way.

In this respect, Lawrence's novel differs from the other set pieces of British modernism. *Women in Love* displays nothing like the framed narratives of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the dual time scheme of Joyce's *Ulysses*, or the rapid shifts of voice and linguistic register of Eliot's "The Waste Land." For better or for worse, Lawrence places his characters in the framework of a generally realistic fiction, tracing their fortunes and aspirations along a single narrative line. To be sure, this temporal organization is subject to a dialogic questioning. Often the narrative is checked by dissenting voices, not least among them that of Birkin, which suggest alternative plots or disjunctive temporalities. Yet at the macrostructural level these possibilities are contained, and the novel maintains a progressive time scheme.[2] If this accounts for Lawrence's contested position within British modernism, it also explains why Birkin is denied the possibility of bisexuality. His longing for "another kind of love" is the novel's vanishing point, at once motivating the narrative but forbidden by the plot. Only by stepping outside this "endless traveling" of committed love can Birkin escape the social constraints that limit his libidinal fantasies.

Leo Bersani notes these connections between the sexual themes and narrative organization in *Women in Love*, drawing a comparison between Lawrence's complaints against frictional motion in sexual activity and his defense of stylistic repetition in the foreword. Concluding that there is a "secret complicity" between the work's obsession with "frictional sex" and longing for "still singleness" (181), he associates these linear narrative functions with the "infinitely repeated motion" criticized by Lawrence as an effect of industrialism and the mechanization of the will. These are important correlations, especially as regards the novel's dissatisfaction with Western modernity, but Bersani examines these narrative complexities exclusively with respect to sexual questions. I believe that the narrative effects of "Lawrentian stillness" are also conspicuous in those sections of the work that deal with primitive cultures, a connection sanctioned by the modernist assumption that traditional societies exist outside of time.

This is most apparent in those episodes in which tribal artifacts are displayed and consumed in an exclusively European context. In the chapter entitled "Fetish," when Birkin, in Halliday's London apartment, encounters an African carving depicting a woman in labor, he immediately classifies it as "art." The following conversation ensues when Gerald requests an explanation:

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"Why is it art?" Gerald asked, shocked, resentful.

"It conveys a complete truth," said Birkin. "It contains the whole truth of that state, whatever you feel about it."

"But you can't call it *high* art," said Gerald.

"High! There are centuries and hundreds of centuries of development in a straight line, behind that carving; it is an awful pitch of culture, of a definite sort."

"What culture?" Gerald asked, in opposition. He hated the sheer African thing.

"Pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical consciousness, really *ultimate* physical consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual. It is so sensual as to be final, supreme." (79)

Whether Birkin uses the word *culture* in the anthropological or humanistic sense is difficult to ascertain, but the epistemological argument by which he justifies his assertion—"It conveys a complete truth"—is grounded in Western, if not specifically Romantic, notions of aesthetic form. He is not interested in the ritual or symbolic functions the carving might have held in its African setting. Nor does he describe the historical and commercial processes by which "*high* art" is constituted in the West.[3] Rather he judges the piece as if he were dealing with universal aesthetic categories, justifying his assumptions by appealing to an evolutionary scheme of cultural development. Unlike E. B. Tylor, whose *Primitive Culture* Lawrence read the month before beginning the novel's final draft, he places the primitive not at the beginning but at the end of a "straight line" of cultural evolution.[4] He believes there is something "ultimate" or "final" about the statue, something that might arrest the novel's forward progress and bring the narrative to a condition of stillness. Clearly, his words here are ideologically fraught, proclaiming the atemporality of the primitive only by attributing to it a "mindless" sensuality at odds with all reality.

George Stocking claims that while Tylor argued that "the present condition of savages was the product of a complex history," it was only with the "cultural anthropology" of Franz Boas that the evolutionist ideal of a universal system of cultural development was abandoned for a relativistic method that examined cultural differences before asking "what is common to all culture" (77, 212). Birkin's insistence that the carving displays "an awful pitch of culture, *of a definite sort*" (emphasis mine) may share something of this relativism, but it does not deactivate his aesthetic universalism. Like the nineteenth-century ethnologists who influenced Boas's thought (Bastian, Lazarus, Steinthal), his approach to the primitive is "conditioned by the cosmographer's perception of wholes" (Stocking 213). Later in the novel, when Birkin remembers another African fetish displayed in Halliday's

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apartment, these aspects of Lawrence's primitivism receive a different inflection.

> She knew what he himself did not know. She had thousands of years of purely sensual, purely unspiritual knowledge behind her. It must have been thousands of years since her race had died, mystically: that is, since the relation between the senses and the outspoken mind had broken, leaving the experience all in one sort, mystically sensual. Thousands of years ago, that which was imminent in himself must have taken place in these Africans: the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation and productive happiness must have lapsed, leaving the single impulse for knowledge in one sort, mindless, progressive knowledge through the senses, knowledge arrested and ending in the senses, mystic knowledge in disintegration and dissolution, knowledge such as the beetles have, which live purely within the world of corruption and cold dissolution. (253)

Birkin finds this fetish to embody a purely "sensual knowledge" that provides evidence a slide into "mindless" sexuality that occurred long ago among the Africans who carved it. As Torgovnick observes, this is a "degenerate" and femininized version of the primitive (161–63), supporting a model of cultural diffusion by which traditional societies are the offshoots of a higher civilization. Thus Birkin imagines not that primitive cultures failed to develop a "desire for creation and productive happiness" but that this aspiration "lapsed" at a point in time. This emphasis on "disintegration" seems to counteract the earlier passage's claims for cultural "development." Yet, as Lawrence's invocation of a "mindless, progressive knowledge" suggests, the idea of progress is implicit in that of degeneration, since the former is the latter in reverse. The complicity of these (opposing) ways of thinking about the primitive is evident in contemporary ethnographic works, like those of Tylor, which simultaneously formulate and apply the anthropological theories of evolutionism and diffusionism. Johannes Fabian remarks the shared consequences of these hypotheses by arguing that the diffusionist understanding of "culture history" disregards "the evolutionist concern with temporal sequence in favor of a model of spatial distribution" (18–19). For Lévi-Strauss, neither approach is suitable for studying "living societies" since their "spatial and temporal coordinates are the result of the way the elements were chosen and assembled, instead of being the reflection of a true unity in the object" (5). Birkin's thoughts cannot be interpreted as a direct commentary on these issues (progress is not necessarily equivalent to evolution), but they also suggest a means of constructing oneness in their object.

Despite its emphasis on "dissolution" and "disintegration," the passage

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describes not a movement toward disorder but a progression toward stillness. As before, Birkin finds the fetish to suggest immobility or closure, "a knowledge arrested and ending in the senses." Moreover, his argument for cultural degeneration yields to a mystical discourse by which the piece embodies a "single impulse for knowledge in one sort." Ostensibly, this phrase refers to an entropic dissociation of the mind from the body, but such an equation of the primitive with the corporeal clearly involves processes of projection and interpretation that reflect the early twentieth-century ethnological tendency to imagine primitive culture as a "complex whole" (Tylor 1). This much is clear in Birkin's claim to discover in the carving "what is imminent in himself." The "unspiritual knowledge" of primitivism suggests to him a mode of sexual activity that is free from the normative constraints of heterosexuality. Thus in the wake of this memory he staves off a premonition of Gerald's death by fantasizing about a "Paradisal entry" into a "lovely state of free proud singleness" that accepts the "obligation of the permanent connection with others . . . but never forfeits its own proud individual singleness, even while it loves and yields" (254). This claim for "singleness" as a mode of sexual enablement parallels his earlier recognition of a "single impulse for knowledge" in the carving, showing the extent to which his libidinal anxieties overdetermine his attribution to the primitive of an "experience all in one sort." The fetish offers Birkin precisely the flexibility he is denied by the novel's plot, an "other way" that would leave him free to marry Ursula and to pursue an intimate relationship with Gerald.

Given this approach to the primitive, it is not surprising that Lawrence's ideal of an "eternal conjunction between two men" (206) resurfaces amid the revival of Aztecan religion in *The Plumed Serpent.* Despite the introduction of mythical and religious materials, this novel maintains the linear narrative sequence of *Women in Love.* Lawrence elaborates his dissatisfaction with modern secularism by celebrating the struggle of a group of religious revivalists to secede from the Mexican nation. He believes in the possibility of a complete restitution of precolonial modes of social and cultural organization in Mexico. Consequently, his ideas about antihegemonic postcolonial activities are colored by notions of primitive atemporality and compositeness. The sermons of Don Ramón advocate a restoration of the "timeless Now" (176), as if the native cultures of Mesoamerica were immune to modernization or historical transformation. Despite his knowledge of the diverse religious and political structures of Amerindian societies, gained from reading texts such as Zelia Nuttall's *The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Civilizations,* Lawrence describes these cultures as having "something mysteriously in common," an "Indian quality that pervades the whole" (76). Such declarations of organicity intensify as the Quetzalcoatl

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movement reaches its culmination, displaying an "acquiescence in the primitive assertion" and positing a "primeval oneness" with "the god, the nation, the tribe" (417). These descriptions are ethnographically problematic, but they provide the appropriate narrative conditions for actualizing the homosocial ideals suppressed in *Women in Love.*

Toward the middle of *The Plumed Serpent,* Kate intuits that the "highest thing" Mexico might produce is a "powerful relation of man to man" (152), and by the end of the book, Don Ramón and Don Cipriano, both of whom are opportunely married, stand together in "the old terrible bond of the blood-unison of man" (417). What is not often noted about this relationship is that it involves an interracial encounter; Don Cipriano is "pure Indian" and Don Ramón is "almost pure Spaniard, but probably has the blood of the Tlaxcalan Indians in his veins as well" (64). Because the novel pays so much attention to the "curious intimacy" and "menacing trust" (67) between these men, it seems to demand a reading similar to that given by Sara Suleri to the more properly colonial allegory of *A Passage to India.* It's homoeroticization of race could thus be understood as a means of representing and testing the social and ethical limits of colonial intimacy.

Like the friendship of Fielding and Aziz in Forster's novel, Ramón and Cipriano's relationship is fraught with a "deferred homosexual decorum" (Suleri 17) that embodies the psychological transferences that mark interracial associations in the (post)colonial situation. At times this becomes quite literal, overriding the famous "not yet" and "not there" of Forster's final sentence. In their closest encounter, Ramón folds his "arms round Cipriano's loins, closing with his hands the secret places," until his friend becomes "rigid and motionless" and both men pass into "perfect unconsciousness" (368–69). More often this physical intimacy is lost within the "wide space of neutral territory" (67) that Lawrence believes to separate an Amerindian from a European, leaving such libidinal energies to be channeled through the female protagonist. At one point in the novel, Kate worries that she, like Adela Quested in *A Passage to India,* is a "subservient, instrumental thing" caught within a masculine "interchange of will" (387). Indeed, one could offer quite a neat reading of *The Plumed Serpent* by arguing that Kate serves as a "mediator" in a dynamic of "triangular desire," allowing Ramón and Cipriano to "become gods in the eyes of each other" (to paraphrase a chapter title from René Girard). Such an argument would work well if it were not for the fact that Kate is herself deified toward the novel's end, renamed Malintzi after the Amerindian woman who became the translator for and mistress of Cortes during his "conquest" of the Aztec empire. Doubling for the figures of Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore ("Esmiss

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Esmoor") in Forster's novel, Lawrence's heroine plays too central a role to be merely a pawn in a game of men.

The novel takes account of this reading, deliberately reversing the standard gender polarities of the "love triangle" when Kate realizes that "without Ramón, Cipriano was just an instrument, and not ultimately interesting to her" (408). Torgovnick regards Kate's centrality as evidence of Lawrence's "narrative transvestism" (172), but if read in the light of the Malintzi story, it also involves a powerful racial inversion. The myth of *la Malinche* or *Malinali Tenepal* is one of the most privileged in Mexican letters, having received multiple retellings since her role in the "conquest" was first documented by Bernal Díaz. According to the standard version, Malintzi is *La Chingada* (the "fucked one"), responsible for the defeat of the Aztec empire, but Chicana feminists have presented her as a shrewd manipulator of Cortes, emphasizing her role as a mother to the mestizo people (Malinche gave birth to Martin Cortes, the first mestizo).[5] Whether consciously or otherwise, Lawrence reverses the terms of this national foundation myth, substituting the racial identities of the central characters by having the Anglo-Celtic Kate marry the Amerindian Cipriano. Yet at no point is the coming of a postrevolutionary Mexico heralded by the birth of a mestizo figure. The sexual activity of Cipriano and Kate is never subordinated to the purposes of reproduction, but partakes in a "strange, heavy, positive passivity" (423) that, whatever its implications for the politics of heterosexuality, attains to the "stillness" of Lawrence's primitivism.

As in *Woman in Love* the primitive signifies a "final rest" (423) that promises to arrest the "endless traveling" of the narrative. Thus the religious rhetoric of Quetzalcoatl, which accompanies Kate's transformation into Malintzi, celebrates the possibility of an atemporal existence. "There is no Before and After" proclaims Ramón in a sermon he delivers at Jamiltepec, "there is only Now" (175). Placing the primitive in the enunciative present, he elevates this fiction into a principle of self-identity: "*I always am.* . . . In the dreamless Now, *I Am*" (175–76). Furthermore he refers to Quetzalcoatl as "lord of the two ways," an appellation that repeats and modifies the rhetorical scheme discovered in *Women in Love*. The narrative operations of *The Plumed Serpent* regulate its treatment of cultural hybridity in much the same way as the linear time scheme of *Women in Love* affects its handling of bisexuality. Thus, while the liaison of Kate and Cipriano promises a radical transfiguration of intercultural relationships—a "strange third thing that was both of them and neither of them" (389)—it is ultimately remastered by the novel's edicts against cultural mixing. Lawrence reverses the racial polarities of the Malinche story, but he can only accept the possibility of cultural hybridity under strict conditions of class hierarchy.

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The Plumed Serpent contains several pronouncements against the mestizo progeny of *la Malinche*. The most extreme of these occurs at the dinner party held for Kate and her friends at Ramón's Mexico City villa. Here, Julio Toussaint, an elderly Mexican, advances the theory that his country's problems derive from the "people of mixed blood," and that unless returned to the "pure-blooded Indians," it will be overtaken by the United States. For Toussaint, the "half-breeds" are the only "*conscious*" people in Mexico, and their downfall results from the fact that they are "begotten in greed and selfish brutality" (66). The "mixed-blood Mexicans," he believes, are "divided against" themselves, being "neither one thing nor another" (64). While it is unacceptable to attribute the opinions of this minor character to the author, Lawrence elsewhere develops these edicts against miscegenation into a general statement about the impossibility of cultural hybridity—that is, the ambivalent and uneven melding of cultures under colonialism. In *Mornings in Mexico*, a collection of essays written at the same time as *The Plumed Serpent*, he writes the following about the relation between the European and the Amerindian:

> The Indian way of consciousness is different and fatal to our own way of consciousness. Our way of consciousness is different from and fatal to the Indian. The two ways, the two streams are never to be united. They are not even to be reconciled. . . . [T]he same paradox exists between the consciousness of white men and Hindoos or Polynesians or Bantu. To pretend that all is one stream is to cause chaos and nullity. To pretend to express one stream in terms of another, so as to identify the two, is false and sentimental. . . . One man can belong to one great way of consciousness only. He may even change from one way to another. But he cannot go both ways at once. (55–56)

This passage, which prescribes the reversal of the Malinche paradigm in *The Plumed Serpent*—"He may even change from one way to another"—reveals some important aspects of Lawrence's attitude toward the primitive. First of all, he takes the European position to be normative. Not only does he assume that the reader is "white," but he also finds the Western perspective to provide a stable point from which to compare diverse cultural traditions. Lawrence writes as if the European "way of consciousness" relates to the Amerindian just as it does to the Hindoo, the Polynesian, or the Bantu. He has no way of asking how these cultures relate to each other because he consigns them all to the same unspecified realm of pure alterity. The only thing we can ascertain about Amerindian culture from this passage is that it is "different from and fatal to" the European culture. For Lawrence, cultural difference is easily mapped over racial lines. Thus, he employs the

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word *consciousness* where today we prefer the more neutral *culture*. More importantly, he denies the possibility of cultural hybridity by assigning to the intercultural encounter the same trope he uses to describe the infeasability of Birkin's bisexuality, the impossibility of going both ways at the same time.

The link between Lawrence's later racial ideologies and his earlier discussions of human sexuality thus becomes clear. Those passages from *Women in Love* in which Birkin polemicizes against "the merging, the clutching, the mingling of love" (200) are well known and much commented upon. But in *The Plumed Serpent* the desire for an "impersonal union that leaves one free" becomes a means of stipulating the possibilities for interracial social/cultural transactions. The similarities between the sexual philosophies of Birkin and Ramón are obvious enough. Both men are nostalgic for the lost oneness posited by the Platonic theory that men and women derive from an archetypal androgynous creature. Implicit in this longing for origins is a dissatisfaction with the modern sexual regime that legislates the mutual exclusivity of hetero- and homosexualities (since heterosexuality is understood as the "scar" of separation). Yet, by imagining the bisexual as a lost possibility, Lawrence contains his narratives within the binary gender identifications of modern heterosexuality (no matter how unmanageable or negotiable they prove to be). An important sign of this is Birkin and Ramón's shared advocacy of the separation of masculine and feminine principles in the heterosexual act. Birkin contends that "passion" involves "that which is manly being taken into the man, that which is womanly passing to the woman, till the two are clear and whole like angels, the admixture of sex in the highest sense surpassed" (201). When Ramón makes similar claims, his words take on racial overtones. Declaring that Quetzalcoatl is a means of showing his followers "the way to their own manhood, their own womanhood," he describes the Mexican people as "half and half, incoherent, part horrible, part pathetic, part good creatures" (209). Because he speaks in sexual terms, his rhetoric cannot be directly associated with Toussaint's excoriation of the "half-breed," but later in the novel, when he speaks of a racial aristocracy, he does make claims about miscegenation:

> The races of the earth are like trees, in the end they neither mix nor mingle. They stand out of each other's way, like trees. Or else they crowd on one another, and their roots grapple, and it is the fight to the death.—Only from the flowers there is commingling. And the flowers of every race are the natural aristocrats of that race. . . . Only the Natural Aristocrats can rise above their nation; and even they do not rise beyond their race. Only the Natural Aristocrats can be international, or cosmopolitan, or cosmic. (248)

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As members of the pantheon of Quetzalcoatl, Kate and Cipriano qualify as "aristocrats," but their "commingling" remains impersonal, like that of flowers. While their sexual activity produces a "strange third thing" (389), they cannot "rise beyond their race." The utopian elements of Lawrence's primitivism rely on this naturalized social hierarchy. Only at the high end of this scale does the primitive provide opportunities for the "transfiguration" (253) of intercultural relationships, for the possibility of traveling "two ways" (179). There is no need to condemn the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism *tout court*, but Lawrence's recourse to a discourse of class difference (generated not by a dialectic of labor and capital but by an organic taxonomy) is more problematic. Clearly, the Quetzalcoatl movement licenses cultural hybridity only as the privilege of "the Natural Aristocrats." Amid Lawrence's manipulations of sexuality and race, the ideology of class suddenly flashes up, a discourse that had been a staple feature of his fiction since *Sons and Lovers.*

This hierarchization of the primitive explains why Lawrence's rewriting of the Malinche story simply reverses the *Chingada* paradigm. Unlike more recent versions in which Malinche becomes the spokesperson for a nationalist Mexico, Lawrence continues the tradition by which she serves as the translator for aristocratic men of different races: Cortes and Montezuma, Ramón and Cipriano. Although Kate's centrality prevents us from understanding her actions as a mere instrumentalization of masculine will, it also foregrounds the racial inversion that marks her relationship with Cipriano. Still, Lawrence's recasting of this foundation myth is not an innocent act. His use of the Malinche paradigm suggests that questions of nationalism are a predominant concern in the novel. Lawrence most forcefully develops this aspect of his work not at the thematic level but via the narrative strategies the novel shares with *Women in Love.* In other words, the narrative functions of Lawrence's primitivism serve the ideological ends of the story they convey. The *fabula* of the Malinche legend requires the *sjuzet* of his primitivism.

To understand why this is so, it is necessary to account not only for the status of the Malinche story as a foundation myth of Mexican nationalism but also for the formal role of narrative itself in generating the novel's conceptions of nationalism. In this regard, we can enlist the assistance of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities,* which argues that the narrative methods of classical realism provide the technical means for the imagination of national affiliation. For Anderson, the realist representation of an imagined world "moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). This argument

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works neatly in the abstract, but there are difficulties applying it to *The Plumed Serpent,* which attributes an ahistorical "*spirit of place*" to Mexico (50). Lawrence understands the return of Quetzalcoatl not as a historical event but as a moment of radical forgetting: "The past is finished. It is the new twilight" (328). Furthermore, Ramón's movement aims at a breakaway from the Mexican nation, prompting a worldwide renewal of traditional modes of religious identification—for example, a Celtic revival of Celtic gods, etc. Despite these "cosmic" aspirations, the movement must eventually accommodate itself to the institutions of Mexican nationalism, specifically the army (in which Cipriano is a general) and the government. In opposition to the church and the reactionary Knights of Cortes, Ramón allies himself with Montes, the elected president, who, in the wake of Cipriano's military victories, passes a law "making the religion of Quetzalcoatl the national religion of the Republic" (420). As such, the movement offers a means for reimagining Mexican nationalism within the terms of Precolumbian modes of religious, cultural, and social life. If this seems an anomaly of Lawrence's later work, it is worth remembering that *Women in Love* also grounds nationalism in the premodern sanguinity of race.

When Hermione and Gerald argue about this topic at Laura Crich's wedding, Birkin intervenes by declaring that "race is the essential element in nationality, in Europe at least" (28). It is difficult to transpose this statement into the non-European context of *The Plumed Serpent,* but if the sexual politics of the earlier novel are organized around the same rhetorical and narrative schemes as the later discussions of race, there are strong grounds for arguing that Lawrence's conceptions of nationalism rest on his ideas of the primitive. Such an association implies a different view of nationalism from that of Anderson, who confines racism to an archaic moment that antecedes the modern nation. For Anderson, "nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations . . . outside history" (149). This argument replicates Lawrence's belief in the atemporality of race, and even associates racism with aristocratic "ideologies of class" (in the manner of Ramón), but it cannot account for the racial/ethnic identifications that temper the secular aspirations of many nations (the contemporary European examples cited by Michael Ignatieff in *Blood and Belonging* being among the most obvious). In this respect, Lawrence's conception of nationalism is more accurately described by Homi Bhabha, who finds the "archaism" of race to reactivate the "primal scene" of the modern nation—that is, "the problematic, historical transition between dynastic lineage societies and horizontal, homogeneous secular communities" (250).

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By positing racism's "timelessness," Bhabha argues, Anderson exposes the

> ambivalent historical temporality of modern national cultures—the aporetic coexistence, within the cultural history of the modern imagined community, of both the dynastic, hierarchical, prefigurative "medieval" traditions (the past), and the secular, synchronous cross-time of modernity (the present). (250)

I believe that Lawrence's celebration of traditional religious forms within the context of a modern national revolution generates a similar "ambivalent" temporality. The spiritual revival of *The Plumed Serpent*, while predicated on the progression of narrative form, requires the repetition of traditional dynastic hierarchies, which Bhabha simply registers as "the past." For Lawrence, this legitimates an aristocratic "commingling," or a "two way" travel in the realm of the primitive. Thus it is in that "strange third thing" between Kate and Cipriano, the hybridity of sexuality and race, that the novel imagines the possibility of a nationalist struggle that will not simply reinforce the transgressive dialectic of modernity. But this requires a movement of return that installs the nation within the atemporal locus of the "Now" (175). Just as Lawrence's rewriting of the Malinche story simply turns the tables on colonial inequalities (inverting rather than displacing the binary logic of racism), so this complicity of timelessness and repetition (noted by Bersani as constitutive of Lawrentian narrative) attests his inability to imagine a cultural hybridity that articulates difference outside an imposed or assumed hierarchy.

Unlike Bhabha, for whom the iterative movement of postcolonial hybridity produces a heterogeneity that frustrates the repressive structures of imperialism, Lawrence's conceptions of cultural translation are caught in an ontological cast where differences are the effects of some more totalizing identity to be discovered in the future or the past. His characters are constantly rubbing up against each other, bringing into contact different cultures and sexualities, but the moment of fusion is forever denied: "No lovely fusion, no communion. No beautiful mingling of sun and mist, no softness in the air, never" (214). For all this, Lawrence struggles toward a recognition of ideals he cannot realize. Even as he verges into the most egregious proclamations of native "mystery" and indigenous otherness, he fumbles for a formula that might dismantle the racial and sexual polarities of the colonial situation, and for this, his primitivism must be remembered.

Lawrence's work provides a means of interrogating the contemporary construction of hybridity within postcolonial theory. As used today, the idea serves to dismantle the putatively essentialist categories of race developed

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in the theories of the past, such as those of E. B. Tylor. Yet as Robert Young has recently argued, the current "cultural" emphasis in postcolonial studies should not obscure the fact that "the racial was always cultural, the essential never unequivocal" (28). Lawrence's hierarchical ideal of the primitive as a space for hybrid "commingling" should alert us to the way in which contemporary postcolonial criticism often foregrounds the mutual implication of racial and gender discourses only by ignoring those of class, if not to the heterosexist assumptions inherent in the very idea of hybridity (Young 26). Without making too much of his frequent use of the word *queer*, we might ask how Lawrence's (always recontrolled) troubling of the split between hetero- and homosexuality destabilizes the division between self and other that underlies his projection of modern desires and anxieties onto primitive cultures.

By implying the possibility of a desire that is not regulated by the imperatives of sameness/otherness, Lawrence not only questions the Freudian pathology of homosexuality as narcissism, but also resists a model of power that reduces race and class differences to the derivative effects of sexual difference.[6] As such, his novels acquire that "distinctive complexity" which Judith Butler attributes to narratives that articulate/silence same-sex eroticism "at those junctures in which a compulsory heterosexuality works in the service of maintaining hegemonic forms of racial purity" (18). Clearly, for Lawrence, the primitive is a category with diverse and shifting meanings, and thus it cannot impose itself on his narratives as a total organizing principle; its effects are always partial and dispersed. Still, it supplies a means for gauging the success of his attempts to move beyond the secular demands of modern rationality. If, as Young contends, our current reliance on the concept of hybridity shows that "we are still locked into parts of the ideological network of a culture that we think and presume that we have surpassed" (27), the most unsettling aspect of Lawrence's primitivism must be its proximity to contemporary efforts to think through the same problem.

NOTES

[1] See Spivak. Such a definition of the postcolonial, with its emphasis on the debts and traces left behind by imperialism, works well to describe the situation in early twentieth-century Mexico depicted in *The Plumed Serpent*. The country achieved independence from Spain in 1821 but maintained strong internal divisions and widespread foreign ownership of enterprises.

[2] Lodge explores the dialogic aspects of *Women in Love* but admits that the novel is "remarkably consistent and homogeneous in narrative methods, invariably using an authorial narrator to frame and mediate the scenic or interiorized presentation of action to the reader" (60).

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[3] See Clifford 189–214 for a detailed critique of the modernist tendency to describe primitive artifacts according to Western notions of aesthetic form and social function.

[4] Sagar lists Tylor's *Primitive Culture* among Lawrence's reading for March 1916. Lawrence began work on the third draft of *Women in Love* in April of the same year.

[5] Cypess offers an account of the various revisions of the Malinche myth in literary and visual forms. For noted feminist retellings, see Moraga and Anzaldúa.

[6] See Warner for an argument that the difference between hetero- and homosexualities is not a difference between sexualities of sameness and otherness but an allegory about gender as the phenomenology of difference itself.

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"The Fabulous Female Form": The Deadly Erotics of the Male Gaze in Mary Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street*

Rachael Sealy Lynch

Recent critical attention to Mary Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street* has tended to focus on the novel's treatment of traditional provincial Irish values, the passing down or rejection of these values in the course of a story spanning three generations and as many social classes, and the losing battle waged by Gabriel, the chief male protagonist, as he struggles and largely fails to extricate himself from the "mind-forged manacles" of his upbringing.[1] Yet much of this criticism has, surprisingly, failed to recognize this novel for what it is—a relentlessly scathing social commentary. Peterson, Bowen, and Garfitt all concur that *The House in Clewe Street*, despite its sympathy for doomed characters like Onny Soraghan, is not a text in which Irish middle-class morality is seriously questioned. Even in the least complacent, most sympathetic readings of this disturbing and underanalyzed novel, like those undertaken by A. A. Kelly and Augustine Martin,[2] the grim details and implications of the narrative, and the parallel development of the servant Onny Soraghan and Gabriel Galloway, the bourgeois heir apparent, remain largely unexplored.

Furthermore, Kelly's 1980 reading remains the most recent serious analysis; the novel has been surprisingly unvisited since, despite a critical climate in Irish studies that one would have thought welcoming to just such a questioning portrayal of bourgeois attitudes and the treatment of women. Lavin's portrait of Onny's degradation surely illustrates to perfection Eavan Boland's contention that the duty of the woman artist is to break the silence surrounding Irish women's issues and to subvert previously inherited "male" literary discourse.[3] A necessarily ironic revisionary rereading of the

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male and middle-class readings of Onny contained within the novel—one demanded by the novel itself—emphasizes that Lavin undertook the very task later underscored in Boland's revisionist agenda.

Why, then, has *The House in Clewe Street* suffered such neglect in recent years? Why do the majority of critical readings of this novel remain virtually unchallenged, when details in the narrative, particularly those connected with the male and female gaze, complicate any attempt at an easy reading, indeed warning the alert reader of the absurdity of relying on the comforting assumption that the narrator's perspective must automatically represent that of the author? On the contrary, Lavin's narrative clearly takes direct aim at the very world it evokes. Despite a wealth of recent work on Irish women writers, including Lavin,[4] the virtual silence on the novel since 1980 continues. One possibility is that Lavin's expressed belief, quoted by Weekes (135), that *The House in Clewe Street* and *Mary O'Grady* are "two bad novels" has too much been taken to heart and has resulted in the ritualized dismissal of these texts. Certainly Weekes herself, and other fine Lavin critics like Janet Dunleavy, have preferred to turn their attention elsewhere.[5] Yet I believe that it has been a mistake to dismiss *The House in Clewe Street.* While it is, admittedly, less taut and more verbose a work than is typical for Lavin, it shares with her short fiction a concern with the position of women in society, a focus on "the human need for love" and on "women and on human concerns" that also encompasses "the sphere of universal humanity" (Weekes 154), and an emphasis on the similarities between male and female minds, needs, experience, and potential across class and gender boundaries. The meeting of minds across such boundaries that illuminates so powerfully and provides the epiphanic moment of Lavin's "In The Middle of the Fields" is explored with similar feeling and greater depth in *The House in Clewe Street.* Just as Bartley Crossen and the young widow cross a social and cultural gulf in their acknowledgment of a shared sense of overwhelming, unmitigated loss in "In the Middle of the Fields," Onny and Gabriel follow paths into adulthood remarkable for their similarities as much as for their differences, despite the claims of an array of distorted subjective points of view offered within this polyvocalic narrative. What I offer here is a long overdue reassessment of an inexplicably overlooked text.

The novel was first published in 1945, during a period of unparalleled social policing and sexual repression in Irish society. That Lavin is not exaggerating, and that her fictional world accurately parallels provincial Irish society during the period 1930–1950, deserves emphasis, and is shockingly affirmed in details like this one provided by Tony Gray:

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> In October [1943], a cinema in Clones, Co. Monaghan, introduced a new regulation which enforced segregated seating of the sexes, men on one side of the aisle and women on the other, though married couples were permitted to sit together. It was not necessary to produce a wedding certificate. Age and a general appearance of respectability were given more consideration by the cinema staff than such things as wedding rings, which could easily have been borrowed for the occasion. (159)

Three points are notable in Gray's account of this appalling invasion of privacy. First, we see evidenced a need, carried in this example to obsessive lengths, to suppress in the public interest all behaviors not deemed respectable. Second, the primary emphasis is placed not on the probable existence of respectability but on its image, identifiable through appropriate "appearance." Lastly, the authority invested in the cinema employees, hardly leaders of society, as arbiters of public morality reveals a society that has internalized self-censorship to an alarming degree. The gaze of the authorized observer, regardless of the social class or personal power of the gazer, is a potent one indeed, since it is this gaze that gauges the appearance of respectability and renders its judgment accordingly. These points are exactly the ones that Lavin addresses in *The House in Clewe Street*; she here explores definitions (and the transmission of such definitions) of respectability in a patriarchal and repressive society, the primacy of appearance, and the destructive potential of the literally killing look. Furthermore, in her ugly fictional exposure of the socially sanctioned writing of women's lives in Irish society, Lavin lays bare the hierarchical framework of Irish society and warns of the dangers of the unthinking acceptance of the dictates of the status quo.

Lavin's sympathies in the novel appear to be close to those of Irish feminists like Nuala ní Dhomhnaill and Edna O'Brien, rather than supportive of received middle-class values. Her portrayal of the attitudes and assumptions behind the building of conventional female narratives and points of view invites comparisons of *The House in Clewe Street* with other contemporary Irish women's responses to female experience in the context of Irish patriarchal culture. For example, the emptiness of the lives of the unmarried sisters, Theresa and Sara (lives serving as textbook illustrations of Carolyn Heilbrun's descriptions in *Writing a Woman's Life* of patriarchally determined female existences, male-written women's lives), is purportedly caused by their father's yanking them before they were ready from one gender role (that of spoiled daughters) to another (that of surrogate mothers) after their mother dies in childbirth. The pair, still children themselves, are commanded thus by their father: "You must love your little sister . . . so that

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she will never miss the love of her poor mother." "He spoke to them," the narrator adds, "as if they were themselves . . . beyond the need of love and care" (36).

However, the real tragedy underlying these women's personal narratives is clearly shown to grow from the very existence of such rigidly predefined roles, narratives of gender controlled and stage-managed by men. Theresa and Sara do dutifully mother their little sister Lily, stifling their resentment and wearing their own youth thin. But how could these two elder daughters have avoided feelings of bitterness, given that before Lily's birth they basked in the satisfied approbation of their father? He anticipated the "grand time" he would have in the sport of "hunting down suitable husbands" for them (19), and he determined—since "a girl would not be expected to work, and since all that she would have would come to her from two sources, from her father and from a husband" (18)—to provide handsomely for their futures.

What Lavin is detailing here is the early twentieth-century provincial bourgeois version of a centuries-old Irish tradition that has inscribed the female in rigid ways, reflecting cultural and religious views on women. Women in Irish culture were and are typically constructed as mothers, love objects, temptresses, servants, nuns, or symbolic embodiments of Ireland. Lavin's female space in *The House in Clewe Street*, like Edna O'Brien's in stories like "Courtship," "Irish Revel," and the graphic and powerful "A Scandalous Woman"—a tale of violence, abuse, narrowly conventional morality, and their destructive consequences—is far less mythic than that inhabited by Ní Dhomhnaill's revisionary Mebh (10), for example, and its occupants rarely come close to defending it with dignity and honor. Onny's defiance, her subversive refusal to behave like a servant, do not and, as Lavin shows us, cannot result in her escape from the ranks of the defensive, the struggling, the violated, the trapped. Lavin's Ireland, like O'Brien's, contains its share of "strange, throttled, sacrificial women" (O'Brien 265). The three sisters, living their lives according to rigidly encoded guidelines, are, less obviously than Onny but equally, the victims of a culture that they would not themselves dream of questioning. Lily's son Gabriel may be able to draw strength, and even gain a degree of maturity, from his ultimate reliance on a set of values that favors his existence, but surely the rigid social codes inscribed in the novel offer a feminist commentary on the ways in which women in Irish culture are routinely and, Lavin seems to be suggesting, inescapably trapped by these codes.

That Gabriel's values are inculcated by his sisters, and in particular by the overbearing Theresa, is typical of the manner in which, as Mary Daly has observed (163–65), the society of women in patriarchal cultures fre-

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quently functions in self-destructive fashion as a powerful—maybe the *most* powerful—perpetrator of patriarchal values. Edna O'Brien's "A Scandalous Woman," for example, contains an unforgettable scene in which the terrified and very young female narrator is forced to submit for a time to a weekly symbolic clitoridectomy performed by a slightly older female neighbor, with a younger sibling as horrified assistant. In the course of these games of "hospital," performed with the help of a "big, black carving knife" and a winding-sheet, the older girl passes on to the two younger ones the essentials of the society in which they live, and in particular that women's lives are full of pain and their bodies are dirty, fearsome vessels for childbearing, itself best viewed as a clinical process. As the narrator lies stretched on the table like a sacrificial victim, the neighbor, adopting a male doctor's persona, right down to their real doctor's "dry, knowing coughs," traces the point of the carving knife around the narrator's "scarcely formed breasts" before moving lower and pronouncing "What nasty business have we got here?" (241–42).

Theresa's treatment of the pregnant teenage widow Lily is a no-less fearsome female transmission of rigid views on the position of women in a male-dominated society. Theresa does grudgingly accord her youngest sister the modicum of respect due to "the band of gold that would make such a difference in the distribution of authority between herself and her [unmarried] sister" (64). However, relations are marred by Lily's having won her husband and her band of gold from under Theresa's acquisitive and expectant nose. Lily's relative household weight is so increased by her marriage that, with her father's blessing, she can put out her shoes with her husband's for her outraged elder sister to polish (77). As long as Cornelius remains alive, his husbandly authority combines with that of the paterfamilias of the Clewe Street household to provide Lily with a safe patriarchal space, and in it she plays her wifely role, flourishes, and, of course, becomes pregnant.

After Cornelius's fatal fall from his horse, Theresa is now free to abuse her power as the family manager, viciously exacting revenge by literally squeezing the life, and the wife, out of her now husbandless and therefore vulnerable younger sister. Lily is infantilized, rendered directionless and dependent, uncertain without her narrative of marriage which script to follow. Declaring to her sister that "It makes me sick to hear people calling you Mrs. Galloway" (91), Theresa attempts to erase entirely Lily's privileged "married" and "widowed" scripts: "The privacy of Lily's room was no longer regarded. The sisters came in and out once more without knocking, and [the servant] was instructed to take away the second pillow that wasn't needed any more" (90). It is only at Theodore's insistence that Lily is given

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her "proper name" by her sisters, and that the uncontrollably envenomed Theresa even acknowledges the existence of Lily's pregnancy. Theodore, aware at least of the clinical implications of his daughter's condition, insists that she be taken to see the doctor.

Theresa's treatment of Gabriel reflects her feelings of ambiguity toward him. He is the product of an undesirable union, and the potential usurper of her own position of "patriarchal" household authority, yet he is also the future man of the house. This delicate balance of Theresa's feelings toward her nephew is weighted against him as a result of Lily's very existence having robbed Theresa of her chances to marry a "suitable husband" while still young. Surely her controlled hatred and abuse of Gabriel, denying the intelligent youngster suitable schooling, for example, can be explained by her sense that she herself is powerless to escape the "assigned script" (Heilbrun's term) of spinster, having been denied a choice even among the limited gender roles available to her. Lavin's feminist treatment of the three sisters may not be strident, but it is nonetheless vivid in its detailing of the plight of women encased in seemingly inescapable narratives of gender. Their stories are never idealized; the women of Clewe Street do not "find beauty even in pain," and Theresa in particular does not transform her rage "into spiritual acceptance" (Heilbrun 12) as she would if she were a heroine in a more traditional genre. Lavin offers us in Theresa a woman poisoned, and poisoning, as a result of the script to which she has been assigned, and it is not a pretty sight.

Close examination of Lavin's portrayal in the novel of Lily's moment of emergence into womanhood, and of Onny, particularly after she becomes Gabriel's mistress, further reinforces our awareness that Lavin is here presenting us with a radical analysis of the ways in which women's destructive personal narratives are written according to the rules of the patriarchist status quo. Both these doomed women are treated far too powerfully and sympathetically to be dismissed as the creations of an author whose agenda is, as Peterson and Garfitt claim, close to that of the status quo. Onny in particular is painful to watch as she struggles, at times blindly, to escape from her inscription as servant and then as slut, from the stifling "assigned scripts" written for her by all who surround her. Onny's desperate attempt to build something as yet unknown—because how could she know?—only to be seduced along the way by the beguiling and ultimately destructive versions of a woman's life she observes in Dublin, is portrayed with searing comprehension. Garfitt, inexplicably, declares that "The fundamental condescension of the middle-class characters toward [Onny] goes unchallenged" (233). Such readings entirely ignore not only the ample evidence to the contrary with which Onny's entire personal narrative is loaded but also the

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foreshadowing complexity of early scenes like that in which Cornelius "discovers" Lily in the darkening garden to be a woman.

This premonitory example of Lavin's dark vision of women's circumscribed lives clearly warns of the dangers of superficial reading. It both underscores Lily's role as victim of the objectifying male gaze that creates what it most desires, and foreshadows the text's later treatment of the "very plastic" Onny (338). The transformation of 16-year-old Lily from "girl" into "woman," in Cornelius's eyes and under his transforming gaze, is sparked by his complicity in the girl's wish to have a long dress to wear to the Annual Outing of the Women's Sodality. Realizing that careful unpicking of the tucks in the dress she is wearing can result in the granting of Lily's wish, Cornelius proceeds, with mounting excitement, to help her in the execution of the task. Lily herself, obviously, remains intrinsically unchanged from the beginning of the scene until the end, but Cornelius, gazing upon her face, is brought to "the sight of desire" (59) by his stage-managing of the event and by the lengthening and shaking out of the girl's dress and the fastening up for the first time of her hair. Lily also is conscious of herself as spectacle, as making changes, through Cornelius's vision of her, in her personal narrative: "in shaking out the folds . . . she was shaking out the lottery of the years ahead." Cornelius has won his prize because he functions as sculptor: "Like a statue that rests unnoticed on a sculptor's bench, awaiting but one more stroke to release it from the matrix and free it as a work of art, Lily's face needed but the lifting of her hair to show what the town would be most astonished to see, that she had both grace and beauty" (59).

This undeniably sensual scene of Lily's unfolding womanhood is read by Bowen as Edenic (65–66). On the contrary, it is clearly provided with sinister undertones, not only by its obvious dependence on the transforming power of the male gaze but also by the gathering evening gloom in which Lily's coming of age is perceived by its initiator, and by the images of entrapment, even muffled violence, that pervade the occasion. Lily's little finger is "caught," for example, on the gold ring of Cornelius's watch chain (61), stimulating her "elated" suitor to "catch" first one, and then both, of "her slender wrists" in his grasp. The reader leaves this scene feeling not that Lily has unfolded into womanhood like a flower but that she has been "pricked" (58) by scissors, unpicked, in a metaphorical act of violation, and then "caught" in Cornelius's inscription of her as woman and wife.

Lavin's portrayal of the objectification of Onny Soraghan is no less specific and astute. Onny's doomed struggle to generate her own personal narrative, with few resources and little knowledge of what is available to her outside the limited conventional scripts written for her (servant, slut, wife) by the Misses Coniffe in Clewe Street and the three men who gaze upon

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her in Dublin, is punctuated by scenes in which her role as gazee, as spectacle, is underlined. Most notably, a ghastly foreshadowing of her fate is provided by her work as an artist's model for Sylvester's friend Telman, and the room in Sylvester's apartment that he makes available to her and Gabriel is his studio, strewn with abandoned "statuary" and "unfinished canvases" (338). Gabriel himself, who spends much of the novel staring at Onny and making value judgments ranging from the admiring to the repelled, is ashamed of the spectacle she makes in her old clothes when he sees that Sylvester's glance is "sharp and critical" (337) as he introduces his lover to his artist friend after they first arrive in Dublin.

Onny's steadfast resistance of the judgmental gaze is truly extraordinary, particularly given her limits of background and experience. She, more than any other character in the novel, defies received notions about who she is and how she should act, displaying a fine spirit of courage and rebellion. Her shunning of Sunday Mass shocks Gabriel, as does her refusal to play the role of submissive servant when Gabriel's aunts come to retrieve him and find Onny instead: "You're not in Clewe Street now, Miss Coniffe," she says, "and you've no rights over me" (384). However, that Gabriel, the well-trained nephew, does presume upon such rights is emphasized throughout. He consistently refers to Onny as his "belonging," refusing to grant his "permission" (414) for Telman to use her as a model, despite financial hardship. When Gabriel protests that he could not live on Onny's money, she rightly counters that "You can live on Sylvester's. . . . I don't see the difference" (415). Sylvester, superficially less judgmental and morally hidebound, proves to be no better. His "affection" (432) for Onny is clearly based on his own feelings of superiority and views on Onny's inescapable class and gender role: "To me she is just a little servant," he says (432), and orders her "to get the dinner" (366).

Onny's eventual fate should not surprise us, given that she is surrounded by such narrow-minded, provincial, bourgeois bigotry, and armed with so few tools for self-survival besides her spirit, her "rich racial pride" (409) in her humble part-tinker origins, and her magnificent body. The wonder is that she resists the definitions and judgments of others as long as she does. Her struggles toward self-definition against all odds result in the only real moments of triumph in the novel, even if these struggles are doomed. We rejoice when Onny, newly arrived in Dublin, refuses to veil her gaze of wonderment at the people and pigeons that afford her such delight. She resists Gabriel's controlling guidebook narrative, his attempts to direct her gaze toward what she refers to as "stupid old buildings" (335), insisting instead on viewing Dublin through *her* eyes. She also prevails in her choice of a new

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wardrobe, against the judgment of Sylvester and Gabriel, with spectacular success and an unerring eye for what suits her.

Yet Sylvester is not one to pass up the opportunity for a satisfying male gaze. In a scene remarkably reminiscent of Lily's coming of age in the garden, he fixes the newly appareled Onny with an objectifying stare, offering his artistic seal of approval: "Now, you look effective, Onny," he says.

> You were only a bundle of clothes when you got off the train; but now you are a woman. The test of a well-dressed woman comes when a man can look at her without being conscious that she is clad; when nothing distracts from the sense of being in the presence of the fabulous female form. (342)

Onny later models her new clothes, not for Gabriel or Sylvester but for herself. Gabriel comments, as she postures and pirouettes in front of the mirror, "It isn't every man who can boast that he has a cabaret show in his bedroom to entertain him while he changes his shirt," but he entirely misses the significance of Onny's performance. "Her eyes were fixed upon the mirror where a reflected lady bowed and postured with her, gesture for gesture. The cabaret show was not for Gabriel. It was for her own delight" (406).

Onny is eventually destroyed, not least as a result of her inability to understand or prevent her continued objectification by those surrounding her. How can a woman with no concrete sense of what is possible outside the limitations of her own experience write her own successful script? She confuses new situations with freedom, enjoying, for example, the opportunity to play "housewife" (358) when she has for so long been cast as servant, and reveling in the financially profitable gaze of Telman. Since he is paying her to perform as spectacle, she does not feel, as she does with Gabriel, that he wishes her to "belong" to him. Her earnest desire to find new models of behavior from which to learn cannot and does not take her far in a society in which every member, from Sylvester to Gabriel's new ultra-respectable female friend Helen, is bound by rigid conventions. Her reactions to her new life, her changes in attitude and assimilation of new ideas, as well as her alterations in clothes and appearance, far outstrip Gabriel's small accommodations to his new environment. Yet the limited gender roles in which she continues to be cast, her naive vulnerability to new impressions and need for the approbation of her new friends, her (hardly surprising) continued ties to her family and superstitious fears, and her increasing compulsion to rebel against Gabriel's wish for total ownership of her person cannot in the end be countered by her courage and sense of self, or such dubious lessons as her new situation has to offer, like "the skillful trick of countering criticism by criticism" (391).

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It must be emphasized that Onny's developmental experiences mirror Gabriel's at an earlier stage. Clearly, the fact that she is a little behind him can be traced entirely to delays in opportunity, not inferiority based on gender or class. We remember that the young Gabriel possesses a well-documented superstitious side, as when he fears divine retribution for missing Mass on a Holy Day (172). His younger self even shares with Onny a belief in the beauty and powers of crude religious art. When we remember his surprise that Sylvester finds much to criticize about a beloved gaudy "cheap print of a religious subject," his "pity" when confronted with Onny's faith in her holy picture (442) is as misplaced as his later hypocritically authoritative rebuke when he discovers that she has put the picture to good use to keep her feet dry (428). Furthermore, of course, Gabriel also is driven to rebel against authority and control as represented by his panoptical Aunt Theresa, she who "sees everything" (173). Such consistency of parallel development as that existing between the personal narratives of Gabriel and Onny, despite the class and gender gap, reminds the reader of the constructed and arbitrary nature of such gaps. In the face of such careful, detailed narrative, it is impossible to accept Garfitt's contention that Onny's behavior is "presented as regrettable immorality . . . without the least hint that she might have been a vital individual in her own right, who was simply taking the only opportunities ever likely to come her way for discovery and growth" (233). Such provocative hints are exactly what Lavin so painstakingly provides; one assumes that the hints missed by Garfitt are those suggestive of irony.

In the light of the details provided by the narrator of Onny's doomed attempt to write her own life, that Gabriel and his friends choose to read her fate as a straightforward example of licentious behavior and subsequent "degradation" (449) is clearly suspect. We doubt the "generosity" of Gabriel's self-conscious tears in Joyce's "The Dead," and I see no reason not to treat with equal caution the final judgments of Lavin's successor. In Lavin's Gabriel can be detected the same unreliability, the same techniques of distanciation, as we note in Joyce's. It is obviously true that we cannot argue that Onny's attempted journey into self-discovery is a triumph. Her recasting of herself in new roles is a failure, and her death on the Dublin streets after a botched abortion is an appalling one. Yet "evil" (449) is clearly a deliberately biased term to describe the site of an illegal termination. Onny's fate must not be separated from the detailed parallel narrative treatment of her and Gabriel before this point. "Degradation" (449) as a term for Onny's final condition, her refusal to bear a child she did not want, reveals more about the abiding Clewe Street mentality than it does about Onny's situation. Gabriel's flawed perspective angles for our sympathy, but in so doing

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it lays for the unwary reader a textual snare. The words used to judge Onny's ghastly end rise from the consciousnesses of the young men who have proved themselves incapable of allowing her to write her own script. The spectacle of female degradation is in the mind of the man who gazes upon it, just as the spectacle of emerging sexuality, "the sight of desire," depends on an alert Pygmalion for its existence; this is the point that *The House in Clewe Street* makes with such undeniable force.

It is difficult, therefore, to concur with critical responses to this novel that, apparently oblivious to Lavin's potent deployment of irony and point of view, assume her acceptance of the conventional bourgeois attitudes she depicts. The text itself warns abundantly of the dangers of reliance on the belief, surely absurd when applied to self-conscious twentieth-century literature, that the narrator's or characters' perspective must automatically represent those of the author. While Bowen does not dismiss the complexity of the novel, he does argue that perhaps the author herself would not see religious, social, and domestic entrapment as "particularly horrendous," since "in Ireland they are merely the given, those constant elements against which real people and Mary Lavin's characters play out their grim existence" (71). Yet surely the novel exposes "the given" with such clarity and exactitude of detail that the effect is indeed repellently "horrendous." Do we really also need Lavin's guiding authorial voice advising us that "the given" as depicted by her narrator is in need of change and suggesting alternatives? Garfitt believes that Lavin does not understand the implications of her own narrative, arguing that "There is sympathy for Onny's death: but that, in literature, as in life, is no substitute for the effort of understanding" (233). I agree entirely, as I agree with Garfitt's further comment that "Gabriel's sudden propulsion into maturity is left dangerously incomplete" (233). However, I cannot see these facts, as Garfitt does, as proof of "the limitations of *Miss Lavin's* perception" (233; emphasis mine). The key to this distasteful and ironic novel is an awareness that it is written with, and indeed derives its force from, an insider's understanding of Gabriel's limited perspective, but that this "effort of understanding" is neither sympathy nor concurrence. *The House in Clewe Street* has been harmed by easy critical assumptions, perhaps formed precisely because Gabriel's world is so vividly and painstaking depicted and the Clewe Street point of view so convincingly articulated. Yet if the irony and complexity of narrative stance so central to this novel are recognized for what they are, an overdue appreciation of Lavin's darkly satiric vision will be ensured.

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NOTES

[1] Both Zack Bowen and Richard F. Peterson examine the novel in the context of the social commentary it provides, although they, and in particular Peterson, do not see Lavin's treatment as ironic. Peterson's reading grounds the perspective of the novel firmly in "the values [Lavin] observed when she lived with her mother's relatives in Athenry," arguing that the narrator's voice, and that of Lavin herself, echo "the social and moral standards of the Irish middle-class world of Castlerampart" (48). Bowen, while he is more alive to the complexities of the situation, also accepts the bourgeois perspective in the novel as triumphant. Roger Garfitt's reading is even more limited; he dismisses Lavin's portrayal of Onny Soraghan as condemnatory and lacking in "understanding." See Douglas Dunn.

[2] A. A. Kelly argues that in this novel Lavin is urging us to "stop reacting to preconceived patterns" (171), and that the author, "always acutely aware of the social framework in which her characters move" (39), is drawing our attention to the unpleasantly hierarchical, respectable, judgmental, and perennially suspicious nature of the society in which Lavin's characters have their existence. Augustine Martin, in the afterword of Lavin's *The House in Clewe Street* (464), acknowledging Lavin's portrayal of a world "dominated by class, property, and a religion that finds its chief expression in the demand for social conformity," notes the ambivalence of the "momentary" triumph of "middle class morality" (474) at the end of the novel, when Gabriel abandons his illusory and tainted freedom in favor of a return to the values he had thought to escape when he ran away with the servant girl Onny.

[3] For these and related arguments, see Boland.

[4] See, for example, Ann Owens Weekes. Chapter 6, "Textual Gardens," discusses Lavin.

[5] Both Weekes and Dunleavy concentrate on Lavin's shorter fiction.

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Navigating the *Wide Sargasso Sea:* Colonial History, English Fiction, and British Empire

Laura E. Ciolkowski

> Englishness is not a fixed identity but a series of contesting identities, a terrain of struggle as to what it means to be English.
>
> —Catherine Hall, *White, Male, and Middle Class* 26

> So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all.
>
> —Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* 102

In a twentieth-century universe increasingly dazzled by fragmentary subjects and delighted by the logics of a global economy, the task of feminist inquiry must be to refuse celebrations of difference in which what is most frequently forgotten is the question of *how and why* such differences continue to be reproduced. Feminist inquiry must, instead, enter into the ongoing struggles over difference, participating in the battle over the meaning of gender and ethnicity, sexuality and national identity; in short, it must enlist in the tempestuous border disputes over what counts as the way things are. Jean Rhys's best-known novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, dramatizes the persistent struggles over meaning that are at the critical center of such a feminist politics of knowledge. *Wide Sargasso Sea* succeeds in more than simply inserting itself into the literary and cultural frameworks of *Jane Eyre*, the novel that Gayatri Spivak has called a "cult text" (263) of English feminism. *Wide Sargasso Sea* also inquires into the production of knowledge about Englishness and, in the process, puts Englishness itself into crisis. This article is, therefore, just as much about the details of Rhys's modernist textual intervention as it is about the making of Englishness in the early nineteenth cen-

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tury, both before and following emancipation. I am interested in the connections forged by Rhys's text between a politics of imperialism and a politics of gender, between English nationhood and English womanhood, and between the local geographies of English fiction and the global terrain of colonialism in the nineteenth century. I would like, further, to read Rhys's text not only as an exposé of empire but also as the occasion to confront the ever-shifting relations between complicity and resistance that mark all aspects of feminist thought. If Antoinette Cosway, the white West Indian woman of *Wide Sargasso Sea,* has come to stand for a form of "native" resistance to English patriarchal power for many contemporary feminist readers of Rhys's text (as well as for Rhys herself), she also ultimately discloses a certain complicity with the very English patriarchal logics she challenges. My reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* consequently explores some of the ways in which the various feminisms of the text both unsettle and reenact many of the commonsense structures of Englishness in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The competing narrative frames, authorial voices, and shifting points of view that characterize *Wide Sargasso Sea* reenact the struggles over meaning that are embedded within the fictions of colonial identity and English imperial control. One of Rhys's early experiments with a title for the novel, "Sargasso Sea (The Wide) Crossing Across" (*Letters* 204), appropriately emphasizes this relentless movement.[1] Antoinette's narrative is literally shaped by the uncertainties of a Creole[2] vision that is fractured by the contradictory claims of British colonial history and the cultural residues of a dying West Indian plantation society. Her impossible task in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is to negotiate between the contradictory logics of British colonialism while also wending her way through the Creole culture and postemancipation English society that continue to elude her.[3] Antoinette explains:

> . . . a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all. (102)

Not quite English and not quite "native," Rhys's Creole woman straddles the embattled divide between human and savage, core and periphery, self and other. "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks" (17) is Rhys's opening invitation into the borderland of the postemancipation West Indies. And yet, while the dramatic collapse of the Caribbean plantation economy in the 1830s succeeded in transforming the class of affluent Creole planters into

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economically and culturally disenfranchised "white niggers" and "cockroaches," locating them outside the ranks of the new community of nonslaveholding English colonials, it did not succeed in fully severing the Creoles' stubborn attachment to England. For the Anglophone, white Creole, Jamaica or Barbados was where one *lived* but England was still one's *home.* Anthony Trollope confirms as much in a rambling midcentury travel book on the West Indies in which he quotes a guide comparing the French colonists' fragile conceptualization of home to the admirably more solid vision held by the English colonists:

> The French colonists, whether Creoles or French, consider the West Indies as their country. They cast no wistful looks towards France. They marry, educate, and build in and for the West Indies, and for the West Indies alone. In our colonies it is different. They are considered more as temporary lodging-places, to be deserted as soon as the occupiers have made money enough by molasses and sugar to return *home.* (159; emphasis in the original)

Of course, the tension between how one actually "made money enough" in the plantation economy of the early nineteenth century and the rising hatred in England for the institution of slavery and the colonial slaveholder complicated still further the task of being a British subject in the West Indies. In response, for example, to tensions over Britain's plan to abolish slavery in the colonies, a plan that did not inspire loyalty to the mother country in most West Indian mercantile planters, colonials in the Jamaican assembly in 1832 angrily renounced their Britishness:

> We owe no more allegiance to the inhabitants of Great Britain than we owe to our brother colonists in Canada . . . As for the King of England . . . what right I should be glad to know has he to Jamaica except that he stole it from Spain? (Robinson 540)

Part One of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is rocked by the disorienting textual motion between the colonial identification and disidentification with England.[4] Rhys's text repeatedly calls attention to this intense ambivalence, lingering over the confusion of the Creole woman who is caught between the increasingly separate moral and economic logics of England and the West Indian colonies.[5] By 1830, there was virtually a national consensus in England regarding the immorality of slavery. The abolitionist movement in England was steeped in the rhetorics of Christian fellowship, human rights, and moral law that not only aided in excluding the slaveholder from the community of respectable English men and women but also clearly invested him with the moral and sexual indecencies attached to the hateful system he espoused.[6] Antoinette's plantocrat father, for example, is more than simply

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a slaveholder. He is also a promiscuous rake and a drunkard, producing "half-caste" bastards almost as quickly as he produces profits and then consuming those profits with equal haste. On the second marriage of Antoinette's mother, the subject of conversation settles on old Cosway and his untimely death:

> Emancipation troubles killed old Cosway? Nonsense—the estate was going downhill for years before that. He drank himself to death. Many's the time when—well! And all those women! She never did anything to stop him—she encouraged him. Presents and smiles for the bastards every Christmas. (29)

Missionaries, abolitionists, and, by midcentury, common English people of all sorts dwelled on the excesses of plantation society. So much so, in fact, that the West Indian plantation owner and, by association, all the members of his family were convenient symbols of evil and immorality by the time Charlotte Brontë chose to write about the moral recuperation of one such tainted personage in *Jane Eyre*.[7]

Rhys's Antoinette Cosway must navigate her way through these treacherous landscapes of Creole and English identity. In short, even before Rochester arrives on the scene to initiate the increasingly violent battle between his narration and hers, his vision and hers, his historical memory of the vices of preemancipation times and her cultivated forgetting, the struggle over meaning that underlies Antoinette's tortured queries about herself and her place in the world is already under way. Rochester observes:

> [Antoinette] was undecided, uncertain about facts—any fact. When I asked her if the snakes we sometimes saw were poisonous, she said, "Not those. The *fer de lance* of course, but there are none here," and added, "but how can *they* be sure? Do you think *they* know?" Then, "*Our* snakes are not poisonous. Of course not." (88; emphasis added)

Forced to shuttle between the multiple knowledges circulating within the text, Antoinette here dramatizes the ontological and epistemological tensions that are endlessly played out on both the visual landscapes and psychic spaces of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The Creole uncertainty that is revealed so startlingly here and elsewhere in Rochester's narration (if simply because it is precisely this uncertainty that alternatively attracts and repels him), is the object of Rochester's intense concern. Over the course of Rhys's text, Rochester labors to make English sense out of this colonial confusion. He is determined to resolve Antoinette's ambivalence first into the singular tones of English womanhood, and second, once his failure to cast Antoinette as

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the chaste mother of English sons is totally clear, into the equally singular tones of a savage Otherness.

By endeavoring to incorporate Antoinette into nothing short of an English civilizing narrative whose racial logics and insidious global trajectory are so elegantly mystified by Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*, Rhys's Edward Rochester maps out the process by which English men and women are made. *Wide Sargasso Sea* takes on the issue of how difference—the difference between English and Creole, white and black, man and woman—organizes what we know and how we know it. It further traces the ways in which such a politics of knowledge is enmeshed in a social logic that exceeds the local limits of a single nation, race, or historical era. Rochester's reinvention of Antoinette as the "red-eyed, wild-haired stranger who was my wife" (149) attaches the local interests of an English domestic economy that is dependent on the stigmatization of female self-indulgence and sexual appetite to the global interests of an English empire that is dependent on the very same elements of female bodily management for the successful reproduction of power. Unlike the Creole mad girl who "thirsts for *anyone*—not for me . . . She'll loosen her black hair, and laugh and coax and flatter (a mad girl. She'll not care who she's loving)" (165), the proper Englishwoman ostensibly restricts all sexual activity to the domain of the patriarchal family and thereby regulates the genetic makeup of the English imperial race. The Englishwoman who must bear the sons responsible for expanding and defending the English empire consequently must also police the biological boundaries of Englishness.[8] And because the healthy nation that embraces the values of the patriarchal family in order to reproduce itself also criminalizes the behaviors of overproductive subjects, the unchaste Creole woman must be the object of sustained legislative attention and state control.[9] In his narrative, Rochester sets out the proper relationship between English Self and ethnic Other by establishing and defending the moral and physical differences that are enlisted as the signifiers of English national identity. Like Bertha Mason, the "intemperate and unchaste" (Brontë 334) West Indian lunatic of Brontë's novel, Antoinette is deemed unsuited for English domestic bliss not because of any psychological disorder from which she might be suffering but because of the appetites and excesses she so liberally exhibits.[10] The food, drink, and money that Antoinette distributes to her insatiable band of Creole relatives recall the equally careless distribution of sexual favors that Rochester believes Antoinette to be handing out in such abundance behind his back:

> As for the money which she handed out so carelessly, not counting it, not knowing how much she gave, or the unfamiliar faces that ap-

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> peared then disappeared, though never without a large meal eaten and a shot of rum I discovered—sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles—if she asked no questions how could I? (90)

The story of imperial motherhood, of which the holy union of Jane and the reformed Rochester in *Jane Eyre* is one familiar variation, is explicitly recast in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a tale of the battle over imperial control. Rhys's text follows the itinerary of the English imperialist's struggles to remake the colonial plantation, with all its excesses, into a shining example of the English patriarchal home. Rochester must put his imperial house in order, as it were, by countering the brazen challenge that is posed by the Creole woman who threatens to carry reproduction outside the domain of the English patriarchal family. If, as Rosemary George has argued, the triumph of the Englishwoman in the colonies was to "replicate the empire on a domestic scale" (108), then the greatest threat posed by this Englishwoman's depraved West Indian counterpart was to reproduce the excesses of the colony in the empire. In the West Indies, as the expansive collection of Cosway children, wives, and bastards testifies, concubinage, miscegenation, rape, and bigamy were common.[11] According to Barbara Bush, "In the West Indies, sexual relationships between black and coloured women and white men were widespread, commonplace and generally accepted by the plantocracy to be an integral part of the social structure of the islands" (11). And not all slave women remained illegitimate mistresses of white masters. Some actually married white plantation owners and, if the law allowed it, were able to legitimize their children, ironically bastardizing the English "race" still further in the eyes of the English community at home.[12] When Rochester compares his wife to the "half-caste" (65) servant girl, Amelie—"For a moment she looked very much like Amelie. Perhaps they are related, I thought. It's possible, it's even probable in this damned place" (127)—he puts his English horror of such couplings clearly on display.

The specter of racial mixing—miscegenation—that haunts the West Indian plantation and stubbornly adheres to all of its inhabitants reemerges with a vengeance in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as the obsessive signifier of colonial difference. The putrid colors of the Creole "half-caste" join the already unnatural extremes of the text's West Indian landscape ("Everything is too much, I felt as I rode wearily after her. Too much blue, too much purple, too much green" [70]) to illustrate a monstrous violation of limits. Antoinette describes one such "half-caste" this way:

> The boy was about fourteen and tall and big for his age, he had a white skin, a dull ugly white covered with freckles, his mouth was a negro's mouth and he had small eyes, like bits of green glass. He

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> had the eyes of a dead fish. Worst, most horrible of all, his hair was crinkled, a negro's hair, but bright red, and his eyebrows and eyelashes were red. (48–49)

The hybrid body—half Negro, half white—simply cannot contain the copious signs of its racial and sexual degeneracy. White skin, Negro mouth, the colors of a white man and the textures of his debased Negro counterpart, are carelessly sewn together here into the corporeal pattern of the Creole grotesque. And the signs of such "unnatural" subjects are everywhere: the "yellow sweating face" (125) of the bastard son who calls himself "Daniel Cosway," the sexual appetite of Antoinette's "coloured" cousin, Sandi, who allegedly lusts after Antoinette and so returns to complete the incestuous circle of colonial degeneracy ("Sandi often came to see me when that man was away" [185], Antoinette reveals).

The carnival cast of misfits and sexual deviants that wander through Rhys's text as the physical advertisements of the "accursed system" of slavery and its aftermath finally advertises the threat of contamination that the slave economy necessarily carries along with it. The exotic excess Rochester records in his narrative promises to spill over into and infect the innocence of the English body. Rochester must, therefore, not only enter into the struggle to fix the commonsense logics of Englishness on the terrain of an utterly maddening colonial intransigence ("'England,' said Christophine . . . 'You think there is such a place? . . . I know what I see with my eyes and I never see it'" [112]). He must also attempt to manage the danger to English cultural identity that is introduced by a degenerate past. Rochester's understanding of himself as an English subject becomes, in Stuart Hall's formulation of cultural identity, "a question of producing in the future an account of the past, that is to say it is always about narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from" (5). In the early nineteenth century, stories of English identity commonly focused on the high moral standards (specifically the opposition to slavery) and religious mission adopted by the English. In fact, British imperial power was understood in no uncertain terms to be the moral right of a morally righteous English people. When David Livingstone traveled to Africa in the 1850s, "opening up" the African continent for the multinational scramble soon to follow, it was both as a British imperialist and as a Christian missionary. Never doubting for a moment either the moral content or the imperialist necessity of his African venture, Livingstone enthusiastically acted out his belief in the virtuous partnership of "commerce and Christianity." As Tim Jeal has put it, Livingstone "seemed to his successors to have

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provided the moral basis for massive imperial expansion" (qtd. in Brantlinger 197).

Yet, the moral basis of the English colonial pursuit in the early nineteenth-century universe of *Wide Sargasso Sea* proves to be not so easy to sustain for Rhys's Edward Rochester. Beset by doubts about himself and the English values in which a figure like David Livingstone would come to place his faith, Rochester wrestles with his recognition of the emptiness of the English moral and ethical claims he makes and with the ways in which these claims are profoundly compromised by the abominable history of slavery in the West Indies.[13] The troublesome traces of historical memory are everywhere and nowhere in Rhys's text. As Carol Ann Howells has argued, there is in *Wide Sargasso Sea* "always the menace of history" (117), embedded as it is in the disavowed past of a village called Massacre ("'And who was massacred here? Slaves?' 'Oh no.' She sounded shocked. 'Not slaves. Something must have happened a long time ago. Nobody remembers now.'" [65–66]) or in the language of a hypocritical churchyard epitaph ("'Pious,' they write up. 'Beloved by all.' Not a word about the people he buy and sell like cattle'" [122]). This churchyard tale of indecency, etched so clearly into the gravestone of Antoinette's father but left deliberately unread by so many of the plantation men and women who mourn his passing, is also repeated on the marble memorial tablets decorating the walls of the church in which Rochester and Antoinette are married. Unlike old Cosway's colonial mourners, however, Rochester does not leave the terrible tale recounted in this inscription unread. Rather, he constructs a damning interpretation that neatly recasts the story of plantocrat indecency as a modern variation on the theme of female disease and bodily contamination. Rochester fixates on the transmission through marriage of a diseased historical legacy in which he convinces himself he is unimplicated, in spite of England's ongoing economic involvement in the colonies. Instead, he imagines himself to be the unsuspecting victim of a highly infectious female carrier of disease—an impression that by midcentury was, perhaps, best illustrated by Victorian images of beautiful yet syphilitic women and by the reams of medical exposés of the polluted bodies of outwardly seductive prostitutes.[14] Rochester ultimately becomes convinced that his healthy body is defiled at the very moment that he takes the ice-cold hand of his lovely West Indian wife in his:

> I remember little of the actual ceremony. Marble memorial tablets on the walls commemorating the virtues of the last generation of planters. All benevolent. All slave-owners. All resting in peace. When we came out of the church I took her hand. It was cold as ice in the hot sun. (77)

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Antoinette's "bad blood" ostensibly contaminates Rochester's body; her diseased bodily fluids purportedly infect Rochester in much the same way as the obeah draught that Antoinette surreptitiously administers to Rochester in order to compel him to love her. After unknowingly drinking the poisonous mixture, Rochester recalls:

> I was too giddy to stand and fell backwards on to the bed, looking at the blanket which was of a peculiar shade of yellow. After looking at it for some time I was able to go over to the window and vomit. It seemed like hours before this stopped. I would lean up against the wall and wipe my face, then the retching and sickness would start again. When it was over I lay on the bed too weak to move. (138)

Rochester physically expels that which both literally and symbolically contaminates him. At the center of his endeavor to fix the difference between an "English" core and an "ethnic" periphery and to organize the epistemological frameworks through which peripheral subjects can be classified, managed, and perhaps even mastered, there is, for Rochester, the imperative to eliminate the threat of contamination posed by an immoral and indecent past—a threat that is embodied for him by Antoinette.[15]

The text's insistent figuration of a legacy of indecency as female "bad blood" transcodes the problem of England's colonial history into a problem of bodily violation. It further reveals some of the more intimate connections between the local economy of meaning in which Brontë's English novel endeavors to restrict itself and the global economies of imperial power within which it nevertheless also moves. The British West Indian colonies that provided the English ladies and gentlemen across the ocean with the sugar for their afternoon tea were, for example, routinely cast by abolitionists in the late eighteenth century as a site of a moral pollution whose despicable foreign products must not infiltrate the local English body at any cost. The abolitionist William Fox proclaimed: "The laws of our country may indeed prohibit us the sugar cane, unless we receive it through the medium of slavery. They may hold it to our lips, steeped in the blood of our fellow creatures; but They cannot compel us to accept the loathsome potion" (qtd. in Sussman 51).[16] The very integrity of Englishness is, here, contingent on the protection of the English body from the foreign matter that threatens it. Charlotte Sussman explains: "abolitionists imagined a domestic body in constant danger from a poisonous world; in order to make their moral point they mobilized fears of bodily pollution" (50). While the "loathsome potion" that Rochester ingests in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is bitter rather than sweet like the slave-grown sugar William Fox abhors, it nevertheless recalls this potentially morally poisonous relationship between Britain and its colonies

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(Rochester thinks to himself, "I have been poisoned" [137]) and reenacts the global struggle over identity that is persistently played out by England and the West Indian colonies on the body.[17] If Rochester's identity is left uncertain by the English laws of primogeniture that provide the younger son with nothing to inherit but his name, at least his physical body and the English tastes and aversions that shape it continue to remind him of his cultural heritage and the colonial power to which it is linked. Alternatively attracted to and repelled by the sights and smells of the West Indies, Rochester learns over the course of Rhys's text to discipline his body like an Englishman; he learns to define himself by the English tastes that, like the love for tea and crumpets and the late eighteenth-century abolitionist's repugnance for slave-grown sugar, help to secure the identity to which he feels at times so tenuously entitled. Following the British abolitionist subject's physical aversion to the West Indian plantocrats and the morally dubious products they market, Rochester's intense physical disgust for Daniel or his literal expulsion of the obeah draught given to him by Antoinette maps out the limits of the English body; it marks him as an English subject whose body ever vigilantly polices the moral and physical differences celebrated by abolitionists like Fox.

Rochester lays claim to "Englishness" with increasing confidence over the course of Rhys's text. Yet, his defense of its integrity and the ways in which he must continually monitor its borders reveal the perilously open and unfinished terrain of colonial difference. Rochester's physical disgust for Daniel, therefore, marks more than just the difference between an English Self and a colonial Other. It also marks the place at which the notion of Englishness itself can be said to unravel insofar as Rochester's physical disgust discloses a point of identification and disidentification between the Englishman and the colonial "half-caste." The scene of Rochester's meeting with Daniel in a small, hot room shadowed only by the framed biblical text, "Vengeance is Mine," exposes both Rochester's horrified rejection and his spirited embrace of the signs of otherness he confronts. If Daniel repeats the truth about Rochester's acute feelings of disgust when he observes, "A tall fine English gentleman like you, you don't want to touch a little yellow rat like me eh?" (125), he also reveals the lie of Rochester's "pure" English difference by exposing the similarities between the "fine English gentleman" and the "little yellow rat" he loathes. The gentleman and the rat of *Wide Sargasso Sea* may appear to occupy the opposite poles in a spectrum of segregated colonial bodies but they ironically share the same fixations and dream the same dreams. Daniel and Rochester each see themselves as disinherited sons who must struggle for wealth, power, and the ever elusive patronymic, the name of the father that Cosway has refused to Daniel

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and that Jean Rhys has refused to Edward Rochester.[18] In spite of the distance Rochester urgently wants to sustain between them, Daniel and Rochester share a resentment for the father, a hunger for legitimacy, and a fascination with the savage propagation of untruths. They also hate Antoinette—with a passion. Daniel tells Rochester:

> They fool you well about that girl. She look you straight in the eye and talk sweet talk—and it's lies she tell you. Lies. Her mother was so. They say she worse than her mother, and she hardly more than a child. Must be you deaf you don't hear people laughing when you marry her. Don't waste your anger on me, sir. It's not I fool you, it's I wish to open your eyes . . . (125)

When Rochester mistakenly recalls Daniel's suggestive parting sentiments of love for Antoinette as a grotesque expression of Daniel's deviant sexuality and incestuous desire, he merely speaks the unspeakable truth of his own questionable claim to English morality and sexual purity.[19] But Rochester's meeting with Daniel not only reveals the tenuousness of Rochester's differentiation of himself and the colonial subjects he despises; it also succeeds in calling into question the very integrity of the English culture and identity that the disenfranchised Rochester and Daniel so urgently desire.

Englishness emerges in *Wide Sargasso Sea* as an empty fiction that is as seductive and dangerous as any of the other tales of identity that circulate in and around the text. Like the gilt rather than golden bourgeois artifacts proudly displayed in Daniel's imitation English sitting room, and like Granbois, the shabby home that "looked like an imitation of an English summer house" (71), the morally upright English gentleman and the superior religious and ethical principles with which he is ostensibly invested mask the utter emptiness of the "authentic" English model to which they refer.[20] The English gentleman of Rhys's text is himself no more than a pretender. Predictably, Rochester replicates the vices of the yellow, sweating figure of Daniel and repeats the sexual vices of the very plantocrats whom he claims to despise. Antoinette accuses Rochester: "You abused the planters and made up stories about them, but you do the same thing. You send the girl away quicker, and with no money or less money, and that's all the difference" (146). And like the slavemaster who assigns to his slaves "new and often ridiculous names" (Bush 24) in an attempt to separate them from their exotic cultures and dangerously alien social structures, Rochester renames Antoinette "Bertha," blasphemously baptising her the madwoman of Charlotte Brontë's Victorian attic.

Wide Sargasso Sea is saturated with "bad copies" that are dangerous not because they are themselves somehow inauthentic but because they under-

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mine the very possibility of authenticity. Rhys shares with other twentieth-century writers of postcolonial fiction an intense suspicion of authenticity and the cultural identities such authenticity necessarily underwrites.[21] If Antoinette and Christophine are uncertain as to whether England really exists, Rhys is uncertain as to whether Englishness itself is real. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have put it, "place, displacement, and a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity are a feature common to all postcolonial literatures in English" (24). Describing some of her experiences as a child, Rhys records in a journal entry:

> My relations with "real" little English boys and girls (real ones) were peculiar . . .
>
> I nearly always disliked them. I soon discovered the peculiarly smug attitude which made them quite sure that I was in some way inferior. My accent! Did I have a bath every morning or did I have it in the evening. Very important. I'm glad to remember that I slapped one little English girl good and hard once. I also soon realised another thing. If I said I was *English* they at once contradicted me—or implied a contradiction—No a colonial—you're not English—inferior being. My mother says colonials aren't ladies and gentlemen, etc., etc.
>
> If on the other hand I'd say exasperated, "All right then I'm not English as a matter of fact I'm not a bit. I'd much rather be French or Spanish. They'd get even more amazed at that. I was [a] traitor. You're British they'd say. . . . Neither one thing nor the other. Heads you win tails I lose—And I never liked their voices any better than they liked mine. (qtd. in O'Connor 19)[22]

Rhys's rhetorically awkward emphasis on "the real" in this passage succeeds in casting doubt on both the English identity she is forced to reject and the alternative national identities to which, as a "British" subject, she is finally prohibited from laying claim. A colonial who is trapped within the logic of a nation-state that enforces her British status while insisting that she can never really be English, Rhys exposes national identity itself as an imperial fiction that is always subject to confusion. As long as Englishness is so unreliable that even the quotation marks, parentheses, and italics of Rhys's journal entry cannot pin it down, "colonial identity" too must remain in doubt. Rhys's work is traitorous, therefore, not merely because it threatens to reposition the colonial within the imperialist narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is traitorous because it betrays the basic trust in the logic of the nation-state and in the authenticity of those subjects whom the nation-state endorses.

In short, *Wide Sargasso Sea* resists English imperial common sense, map-

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ping out instead the multiple battles over what gets to count as the way things are. That Rhys plays out these battles on the terrain of the English novel, situating her text both beside and against Charlotte Brontë's nineteenth-century canonical narrative of English womanhood, is no surprise; rather, such explicitly intertextual struggles have helped critical readers of Rhys's fiction to place Rhys within a postcolonial literary tradition that is specifically interested in rewriting the fictions of English empire. Helen Tiffin argues:

> Understandably, it has become the project of post-colonial writing to investigate European textual capture of places and peoples and to intervene in that originary and continuing containment. Post-colonial refusals of the interpellated subject position take place, appropriately, through that original avenue of interpellation—textuality—and a mapping and dismantling of particular, canonically enshrined imperial texts constitute a major part of post-colonial writing: re-writing of *The Tempest* by writers from Australia and particularly Canada, the West Indies, and Africa; of *Robinson Crusoe* by Marcus Clarke, J. M. Coetzee, and Samuel Selvon; of *Heart of Darkness* by many writers; and perhaps most famous of all, Jean Rhys's re-writing of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* (xx)[23]

Rhys's work is a strong instance of a mode of postcolonial literary resistance that, as Tiffin goes on to argue, is not so much confined to a specific text as it is directed against the "whole of the discursive field" within which the text is located. (30) In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys writes back not only to Charlotte Brontë but also to the imperial logics and commonsense structures in which Brontë's text is produced and consumed. Her inquiry into the history of certain kinds of social difference and the processes by which English and colonial subjects are differentiated consequently unsettles both the emergent liberal-feminist narrative of *Jane Eyre* and the larger colonialist enterprise in which it is so heavily invested.

Wide Sargasso Sea lends itself exceedingly well to the many inspired readings of postcolonial opposition and political resistance. In fact, on many occasions Rhys herself explicitly cast her project in *Wide Sargasso Sea* in such oppositional terms, claiming "The Creole is of course the important one [in Brontë's novel] . . . I'm fighting mad to tell *her* story" (*Letters* 157); Brontë's novel is "only one side—the English side"; "white West Indians . . . have a side and a point of view" (*Letters* 297). Yet, Rhys's text also frustrates literary critical attempts to cast Antoinette as the Other whose native resistance single-handedly challenges the shape of English hegemonic vision. In spite of Rhys's celebrated promise to give Brontë's silent madwoman a

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chance to tell her story—"I thought I'd try to write her a life," Rhys explains[24]—Antoinette persists in replicating many of the basic elements of the English imperial narratives she scorns. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette follows in the path of the Englishman who routinely elides the differences among the native populations over whom he rules. For example, when she looks out on a crowd of islanders, Antoinette carefully surveys the collection of black people standing before her but is unable to distinguish anyone: "They all looked the same, it was the same face repeated over and over, eyes gleaming, mouth half open to shout" (42). Despite Rochester's conviction that Antoinette's "dark alien eyes" (67) ensure that she is neither a European nor an Englishwoman, Antoinette's failure of vision here brands her such a woman just as surely as Rochester's inability to distinguish between Creole bodies ("Thin or fat they all looked alike" [77]) brands him an Englishman. And if the Englishman is repulsed by the spectacle of racial mixing that is to be found virtually everywhere on the islands, Antoinette is similarly horrified. The scene she witnesses between her mother and a black servant incites in her a response that could just as easily have come from her estranged English husband:

> I dismounted and ran quickly on to the veranda where I could look into the room. I remember the dress she was wearing—an evening dress cut very low, and she was barefooted. There was a fat black man with a glass of rum in his hand . . . I saw the man lift her up out of the chair and kiss her. I saw his mouth fasten on hers and she went all soft and limp in his arms and he laughed . . . Christophine was waiting for me when I came back crying. "What you want to go up there for?" she said, and I said, "You shut up devil, damned black devil from Hell." (134)

The black mouth fastened on Antoinette's mother threatens to swallow up whole the racial and class differences that purport to organize bodies in space. Anticipating Rochester's English imperialist reinvention of Antoinette as "Bertha Mason," Antoinette endeavors to reassert order by shoring up the difference between herself and the others who surround her. In other words, if Christophine is a "damned black devil from Hell," then perhaps the difference that was momentarily put in doubt by the monstrous coupling Antoinette witnesses is still safe. Antoinette's racial disgust and her inability to tell the difference between the individual black bodies that everywhere confront her further reveal some of the ways in which Antoinette's epistemological universe and Rochester's can be said to correspond. Rhys's text troubles the operations of a postcolonial feminism that unconditionally aligns itself with the rejuvenated figure of Brontë's West

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Indian madwoman because it discloses the complicated relationship between Antoinette's complicity with and her resistance to the English imperial project.

The relationship between complicity and resistance in *Wide Sargasso Sea* calls attention to the highly mystified ways in which the feminist critique of empire also routinely reproduces the empire's most basic philosophical principles and cultural assumptions. Like Antoinette, who replicates English imperialist structures of vision in her own racist disgust and in the desire it partially masks; and like Rhys, who expresses in her letters and interviews an envy and hatred for black men that sit awkwardly beside her celebrated literary refusals of English patriarchy and her critique of the moral discourse of imperialism,[25] feminist critiques of English empire have largely been formulated through the reigning (imperialist) modes of making sense. English feminists at the turn of the nineteenth century, for example, openly contested the notion that the female object of the English civilizing gaze is inherently diseased, morally corrupt, and sexually degenerate (and therefore in need of rigorous surveillance and sexual management) even as they actively endorsed the principles of English racial purity and moral superiority that underwrote the very civilizing gaze they questioned. According to Antoinette Burton,

> Most [late nineteenth-century English] feminists believed in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, frequently citing possession of empire as evidence of a superiority that was not just racial, but religious and cultural as well. A strong sense of female superiority combined readily with other assumptions of imperial supremacy to make British feminists conceive of "The Anglo-Saxon Woman" as the savior of her race, not to mention as the highest female type. (296)[26]

Twentieth-century feminist critics of empire are the inheritors of this acutely contradictory program. Contemporary feminist critique necessarily follows in the tradition Burton describes by replicating the tangle of antiimperialist politics, spirited challenges to patriarchal structures, and a fundamentally racist investment in something called "English civilization." The borderland in which *Wide Sargasso Sea* is set consequently not only anticipates but also replays the uneven and contestatory relations of Western feminism as it moves from the twentieth into the twenty-first century. Unlike the stagnant seaweed in the waters between England and the West Indies for which Christopher Columbus first named the Sargasso Sea, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* is all about struggle. *Wide Sargasso Sea* does not simply replicate English imperial common sense but rather maps out the myriad disputes over what

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gets to count as the ways things are. In short, feminist inquiry must, like Rhys's text, concern itself with the struggle over borders; it must, finally, resist seduction by futuristic visions of a pluralist peace that is really only the stagnation of Columbus's Sargasso Sea.

NOTES

[1] Six months later Rhys calls the text "(Across the?) Wide Sargasso Sea" (*Letters* 210), still unable definitely to discard the explicit reference to "crossings" in her title.

[2] Throughout, *Creole* will be used to designate persons born in the West Indies to European settlers or their descendants. The term is, however, hopelessly imprecise, given the tremendously complicated racial politics of European colonial societies in the Caribbean. I employ it here in part because of the very anxieties over racial mixing that it introduces and in part because this is the terminology that Rhys herself used to describe native-born white subjects like Antoinette Cosway.

[3] See Raiskin for an exploration of the intricacies of the Creole woman in Rhys's short fiction.

[4] While *Wide Sargasso Sea* is most explicitly concerned with the relationship between the West Indian colonies and England, it also reveals the many other often warring cultural forces (for example the French and Carib) that are at work in the text's nineteenth-century Caribbean society.

[5] In order to compete, the West Indian sugar trade depended on the continued support of protectionist policies in England. As the century wore on, however, the English political tide flowed more and more decisively against protectionism and toward a philosophy of laissez-faire economics.

[6] On the abolitionist movement in England see Midgley, Ware, and Catherine Hall.

[7] Like Antoinette's father in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Edward Rochester's "gross, impure, depraved" (Brontē 334) lunatic wife in *Jane Eyre* attaches the excesses of temper (drink) to the excesses of sex (chastity). If Brontē's Rochester is made savage by his bond to such a wife, however, he is both literally and symbolically purified by the heavenly heroine, Jane Eyre. Zonana has read Jane Eyre's recuperative gesture as one, more specifically, of Westernization. Zonana argues that Rochester "is 'Eastern' in his ways, and for Jane to be happy, he must be thoroughly Westernized" (597). Such a reading is actually taken up in *Wide Sargasso Sea* insofar as Rhys is interested in the ways in which Rochester struggles to sever himself from the West Indian influence introduced by his unfortunate (and horrifying) matrimonial attachment.

[8] Davin considers some of the connections between imperialism and motherhood in England in the early twentieth century when, as she has put it, "child-rearing was becoming a national duty not just a moral one" (13). Davin's thoughtful reading of journals, reports, and guides to motherhood during this period, defined by the devastating losses of the Boer War and the widespread projections of biological decline, reveal persistent expressions of national and imperial interest in motherhood and child rearing.

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[9] The "healthy" nation-state criminalizes the behavior of underproductive subjects as well. As Alexander has argued,

> Not just (any) *body* can be a citizen any more, for *some* bodies have been marked by the state as non-procreative, in pursuit of sex only for pleasure, a sex that is non-productive of babies and of no economic gain. Having refused the heterosexual imperative of citizenship, *these* bodies, according to the state, pose a profound threat to the very survival of the nation. (6)

The nation-state, additionally, criminalizes the behavior of ostensibly unassimilable subjects like Rhys's Christophine, who insists on resisting English culture and English ways of knowing.

[10] Rochester's attempt to recount to Jane the story of his courtship and marriage to Bertha Mason and, finally, the horrifying tale of Bertha's precipitous decline reveal the preoccupation with sexual appetite that is taken up and embellished on by Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea.* Rochester's collection of petty evidence of his West Indian wife's madness—she is by Rochester's estimation guilty of the crimes of backward social skills, bad taste, a nasty temper, and a weak intellect—is juxtaposed with the clearly frightful sexual vices of which Bertha is both implicitly and explicitly accused. The litany of evidence introduced by Rochester powerfully (and predictably) culminates in the startling revelation of Bertha's unchastity.

[11] Although, of course, the rape of a black slave by a white master did not legally exist as such. Insofar as the slave was the legal equivalent of chattel, the white master could not be prosecuted for the rape of any of his slaves. On this and many other questions regarding colonial rule and the relations between slave and master, the white man literally stood above the law.

[12] In *Caribbean Transformations,* Mintz sets out three distinct patterns of sexual relations in slave society:

> The masters might acquire temporary sexual partners of slave status and different culture, while aspiring eventually to return to Europe and marry legitimately there; or they might maintain mistresses though married to European wives who accompanied them in their Caribbean exile; or, finally, they might marry wives who were originally of slave status and different culture, and legitimize their children (if legally permitted), as part of their settling down to stay in the Caribbean colony. (308)

According to Dadzie, however, the number of slave women who managed to escape from slavery in this way was very small: "Only a small minority of midwives, doctoresses, domestics and housekeepers—the latter often doubling as mistresses and elevated in the prevailing climate of absenteeism to a tenuous position of influence—managed to escape the rigours of field labour" (22).

[13] The slave system challenged the English family model on its most basic level, for example, by endorsing the practice of miscegenation and by rendering impossible the proper relations of power in the slave family. In an 1824 abolitionist tract on the condition of slaves in Jamaica, Thomas Cooper described how the woman who is a slave

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> cannot obey the wishes of her husband; her body, strength and time, are the property of another, whom she is compelled, at her peril, to obey. The concerns of her family must be, to her, matters of very inferior moment, compared with the work of her owner. He insists on all the prime of her strength being devoted to his business; it is only after the toils, the indecencies, the insults and miseries of a day spent in the gang, that she can think of doing anything to promote the comfort of her household. (qtd. in Sussman 65)

[14] W. W. Sanger introduces his 1859 *History of Prostitution* by asserting: "There is now existing a moral Pestilence which creeps insidiously into the privacy of the domestic circle, and draws thence the myriads of its victims, and which saps the foundation of that holy confidence, the first, the most beautiful attraction of home" (qtd. in Nead 122). The rhetoric around specific forms of "female disease" like syphilis replicates this emphasis on female stealth and physiological concealment. See Walkowitz, Mort, and Gilman. Similar such rhetoric about a concealed female pestilence was also a central theme in the representation of tuberculosis in Rhys's twentieth-century society. The threat of tuberculosis, like the threat of syphilis and prostitution, inspired the careful monitoring and containment of particular segments of the female population. According to Cartwright,

> Women appear in TB public health media not as the privileged objects of medical concern, but as representative bearers of contagious and insidiously hidden infection. They play a metaphorical role as deceptive carriers of a disease that is invisible except under the X-ray, threatening the integrity of the family, the community, and the nation. (22)

[15] As Erwin has argued, even Rochester's physical disgust for Daniel is instantly attributed to the alleged feminine sexual vices he accuses Antoinette of committing. According to Erwin, Rochester's narrative constructs a

> relay of sexual contamination that circulates *through* males but is finally displaced *onto* females and exorcised . . . Rochester's contact with Daniel is itself a contamination that must immediately be passed on to the woman and thus transformed into *her* guilt. (147)

As in the narrative of imperial motherhood in which the reproductive activity of women means the life or death of the nation, Rochester's narrative of English "soul-making," as Gayatri Spivak might put it, turns on the question of female sexuality and the ways in which it might be both managed and controlled.

[16] According to Sussman, the tropes of bodily pollution used by Fox in his pamphlet "were widely known and widely imitated during the period" (51). For a good introduction to the long and complicated history of sugar and British colonialism, see Mintz, *Sweetness and Power.*

[17] The terms of this ostensibly poisonous relationship conspicuously reemerge later in the century when, in the wake of the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Eastern drugs like opium allegedly threatened to penetrate the English body and infect it with an insidious and subversive colonial influence. The presence of Thomas DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* on the bookshelf in the

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room occupied by Rochester at Granbois, the room that was Mr. Mason's, alludes quite provocatively to this threat.

[18] As many readers of *Wide Sargasso Sea* have noted, Rochester is significantly left unnamed in Rhys's text. Gayatri Spivak observes, "Rhys denies to Brontë's Rochester the one thing that is supposed to be secured in the Oedipal relay: the Name of the Father, or the patronymic. In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the character corresponding to Rochester has no name" (Spivak 271).

[19] Daniel's salutation, "Give my love to your wife—my sister . . . You are not the first to kiss her pretty face. Pretty face, soft skin, pretty colour—not yellow like me. But my sister just the same . . ." (126) is later recalled by Rochester as: *"Give my sister your wife a kiss from me. Love her as I did—oh yes I did . . ."* (158).

[20] By the 1840s Daniel's "imitation" English cottage would have been a common sight in Jamaica. Missionaries in Jamaica after emancipation helped to found villages of freed slaves that were designed to replicate as closely as possible the signs of English civilized life. The design was also intended to persuade all those back home of the freed slaves' progress. According to James Phillippo, the cottages in such villages typically had a small plot in front of the house that was "cultivated in the style of a European garden, displaying rose-bushes, and other flowering shrubs, among the choicer vegetable productions . . . and fruits of the country heterogeneously intermixed . . ." Inside the cottage one would find

> a sleeping apartment at each end and a sitting room in the centre . . . Many of the [sleeping rooms] contain good mahogany bedsteads, a washing-stand, a looking-glass and chairs. The middle apartment is usually furnished with a sideboard, displaying sundry articles of crockery ware, some decent-looking chairs, and not infrequently with a few broadsheets of the Tract Society hung around the walls in neat frames of cedar. (qtd. in Craton 305–306)

[21] My contention here regarding Rhys and the category of the authentic is necessarily in opposition to critics of *Wide Sargasso Sea* who have wanted, in Hulme's critical characterization of their agenda, "to install *Wide Sargasso Sea* as an 'authentic' and 'historical' response to the 'inauthentic' and 'fictional' version of West Indian creole life offered by Jane Eyre" (81). Hulme's excellent article on the production of Rhys's novel endeavors to untangle some of the biographical and historical complexities embedded by Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

[22] This material appears with a number of interesting alterations in Rhys's short story, "The Day They Burned the Books," published in the collection *Tigers Are Better Looking*. Rhys regularly borrowed from her journals in the composition of her fiction and, just as frequently, drew on materials from her fiction in the composition of her journals.

[23] See also Brydon and Tiffin.

[24] The relevant quotation, from a 1979 interview with Rhys, reads as follows:

> When I read *Jane Eyre* as a child, I thought, why should she think Creole women are lunatics and all that? What a shame to make Rochester's first wife, Bertha, the awful madwoman, and I immediately thought I'd write the story as it might really have been. She seemed such a poor ghost. I thought I'd try to write her a life. (qtd. in Vreeland 235)

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[25] In a conversation with David Plante, Rhys confesses:

> I hate. I hate [the blacks in Dominica]. We didn't treat them badly. We didn't. I hate them . . . And yet, I was kissed once by a Nigerian, in a café in Paris, and I understood, a little. I understand why they are attractive. It goes very deep. They danced, danced in the sunlight, and how I envied them. (248)

In her unfinished autobiography, *Smile Please*, Rhys expresses similar sentiments. She recounts:

> Side by side with my growing wariness of black people there was envy. I decided they had a better time than we did; they laughed a lot though they seldom smiled. They were stronger than we were, they could walk a long way without getting tired. Carry heavy weights with ease . . . (39–40)

[26] See also Paxton.

This article is for Christina Crosby, living proof that guardian angels really do exist.

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"Mit entgegenwirkenden Strömungen": The Discourse of Brecht's *Der Jasager*

Kevin Eubanks

To analyze Bertolt Brecht's *Der Jasager* [*He Who Says Yes*] and *Der Neinsager* [*He Who Says No*], didactic "school operas" written for performance by students, critics often use similar approaches. First, they examine the texts that form the history of the plot: Arthur Waley's translation of a Japanese No play; Brecht's two versions of *Der Jasager*; and his third version of the story, *Der Neinsager*. They then judge each of Brecht's versions using formalist criteria such as unity and internal logic.

A representative of this approach is Ronald Speirs. He compares Brecht's plays with Waley's translation in order to demonstrate what he calls Brecht's "increasingly shallow manipulations of the Japanese plot" (177) and concludes that Brecht's final versions of the drama are unsuccessful because they sacrifice complexity for rationalism. Wolfgang Pasche uses a similar approach, but reaches a different conclusion. He asserts that Brecht's final versions are more successful because, in them, Brecht has transformed a drama originally based on superstitious ritual into a drama based on reason (147).

These readings, though useful, are not wholly adequate for a proper understanding of Brecht's achievement. One reason is that they do not trace the development of the story fully through all its versions. Without such a full consideration, one cannot appreciate how many of the elements of Brecht's drama, including unresolved tensions, are actually traces of the earlier dramas. Another reason is that a formalist attempt to judge Brecht's drama as a unified, self-contained artifact risks missing the unique dynamic of Brechtian composition, a dynamic based on dialectic more than artistic

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unity. My reading of *Der Jasager* in this essay will trace the history of the plot not to determine the comparative worth of each text, but to identify the various voices present in each version. Such a reading will not only offer a more complete historical picture, but will perhaps also provide a model of readership for Brecht's dramas, one that is congenial to the author's own ideas of reading and writing literature.

The story that eventually became *Der Jasager* had its origins in a Japanese No drama entitled *Taniko.* This work, variously attributed to Seami or Zenchiku, tells the story of a boy who accompanies a group of *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics) on a pilgrimage in order to pray for his ill mother. However, the boy himself falls ill on the journey and, according to an ancient custom, is thrown into the valley and killed. The pilgrims pray that his life may be restored, and because of his filial piety, the gods answer the prayer (Tyler 318–30). In this original version, the motivations are complex and contradictory. The love of the boy for his mother causes his death and his return to life. The pilgrims mourn the boy's fate at the very moment they hurl him into the valley. These tensions are more or less relieved, however, by the final appearance of the god who resurrects the boy. The god functions as a deus ex machina in the strictest sense; he is a method to resolve tensions that would otherwise be incapable of resolution.

In the next step of the play's progress, the drama was read by Arthur Waley and translated into English. Even the act of translation, sometimes assumed to be a more or less neutral process, changes the dynamic of the play. The play loses some of its aesthetic qualities. One reason is that Waley greatly abridges the drama; over half the original version is omitted from the translation. The sections omitted are mostly belletristic passages, descriptions of natural scenery and poetic laments about life. Even the passages that remain assume a different literary aspect. As Waley himself admits, the Japanese text is very formal, replete with honorifics and long strings of "weighty auxilaries" (33). Waley's translation transforms the baroque complexity of the Japanese text into an austere formality.

But even more significant than these changes is Waley's omission of the ending of the drama. In his translation, the play ends with the pilgrims throwing the boy into the valley, and only a footnote remains to alert the reader that the original ended very differently. Not surprisingly, this change shifts the emphasis of the play. Now, the tensions built up throughout the work remain unresolved. And the drama loses many of its religious implications. Without the god's appearance at the end, the play becomes a drama about human rituals. The locus of power now seems to center on the Great Custom itself, not the spiritual basis behind it. Waley's translation thus an-

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ticipates and even somewhat determines Brecht's version in the shift to simple language and the de-emphasis of spiritual elements.

After Waley's translation, the next step in the process is Elisabeth Hauptmann's translation of Waley's text into German. This step is almost always overlooked by critics of Brecht's dramas. John Willett is not alone in his opinion that Brecht "bodily took over nearly all Waley's text" (97). But there is actually no evidence that Brecht read Waley's text. Except for the removal of religious elements, Brecht's drama follows Hauptmann's translation almost word for word. He even reproduces Hauptmann's mistranslations of Waley.[1]

In terms of style, Hauptmann maintains the simple style of Waley's text. She also continues the process of secularization that had begun with Waley. In her translation, the religious ending of the play, relegated to a footnote in Waley's version, becomes even less apparent. Whereas Waley briefly describes how the god appears and resurrects the boy, Hauptmann merely writes in her footnote: "Der Schluß des japanischen Originals berichtet von der Auferweckung des Knaben zu einem neuen Leben" [The ending of the Japanese original presents the resurrection of the youth] (Hauptmann 18). By this point in the play's development, the style has been largely determined, as has the emphasis on the Great Custom, devoid of its religious significance.

With Hauptmann's translation, the chain leads to Brecht. Brecht's version is a continuation of the trends begun in the earlier versions. He moves the drama even further away from literary language by removing the few remaining traces of elevated verse. For example, in Hauptmann's version (like Waley's), the mother tells her son, "Du warst nie länger aus meinen Gedanken und aus meinen Augen, als ein Tautropfen braucht, um zu verdunsten" [You were never out of my thoughts and out of my sight longer than it takes a dewdrop to evaporate] (Hauptmann 15). Brecht changes the metaphor:

> Du warst nie länger
> Aus meinem Gedächtnis . . .
> Als ich brauchte, um
> Dein Essen zu bereiten
> Deine Kleider zu richten und
> Das Geld zu beschaffen.
>
> [You were never longer
> Out of my thoughts . . .
> Than the time I needed

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To prepare your food,
To mend your clothes, and
To get money.] (*Der Jasager und Der Neinsager* [*JN*] 22)

The emphasis here on labor and capital rather than dewdrops is in keeping with Brecht's political motivations in writing the drama. Changes such as this one also serve to lessen the pathos of the drama.

The most obvious change Brecht makes is to completely secularize and rationalize the text. In his version, the *yamabushi* becomes merely a teacher, and the journey into the mountains is a research expedition, not a pilgrimage. The boy now wants to cross the mountains so he can get medicine and medical instruction to help his mother. In Brecht's treatment, the moral of the play becomes the necessity of *Einverständnis* [agreement]; the boy agrees to his own death because his society requires it. And since the death of the boy is the main point of the play, his miraculous resurrection disappears altogether.

Although Brecht carries the de-emphasis of religion and traditional aesthetics almost to their limits, profound tensions still remain in the work between Brecht's voice and the other voices present in the drama, including past authors and Kurt Weill, who wrote the music for the play. For example, Brecht's *knapper Stil* [terse style] is offset by Weill's setting of the text, which uses such overtly artificial, aesthetic devices as counterpoint, melisma, and text repetition. Likewise, Brecht's elimination of emotion-laden passages does not lessen the tension between reason and emotion. As the reactions to the first performance reveal, the work still excited audience empathy. The students who attended the performance made comments such as "Das ist ja Mord" [That's murder] and "Das ist doch grausam" [But that's horrible] ("Protokolle" 61). Weill's music again plays a part in eliciting such emotions. His somber music for the play, almost wholly in minor keys, creates a tragic atmosphere.

Brecht's rationalizing tendencies also do not obliterate the religious origins of the play, nor do they fully explain the death of the boy. Reviews of the first performance describe the death as not justified. Frank Warschauer says the murder is "nicht vernünftig" [not sensible] (72) because the students who kill the boy are following "sinnlose Autorität" [senseless authority] (73). Walter Dirks says that even though the boy is partially responsible for his death, the worldview in the play is still basically god-centered (78–79). Present-day critics concur with these opinions; Pasche, for example, says the final agreement is not with reason, but with blind ritual (147).

After the initial performance, Brecht discussed it with the student performers and then revised the play. (In fact, he created two versions, *Der*

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Jasager and *Der Neinsager*.) As a result of this process, new voices join the discourse. Some changes in the revised version of *Der Jasager* seem to be directly traceable to the student suggestions recorded after the first performance. For example, one student suggested that the boy be left behind, and then kill himself out of fear ("Protokolle" 59). In the second *Jasager*, the characters do decide to leave the boy behind, but he asks them to kill him (*JN* 36). Another student recommended that the travelers should try to carry the boy before deciding to leave him ("Protokolle" 60), and Brecht added the incident (*JN* 37). A third suggested that the boy hestitate for a moment before agreeing to his fate; such a pause, the student noted, would make him seem more human and less a "martyr" ("Protokolle" 60). Brecht made the change (*JN* 36). These revisions, along with others made by Brecht, mitigate the harshness of the killing and represent further rationalizations of the deed.

Brecht also eliminates the Great Custom that demands the boy's death. In this version, the boy must be left behind because the expedition is crossing the mountains to fetch medicine for an epidemic that has overtaken the village. Yet despite all of these changes, some tensions remain unresolved. Pasche says that this version is completely rational because the boy's sacrifice is now one for the good of others rather than an obeisance to ritual (147–48). However, Speirs notes that problems remain with the text's logic. He asks why the boy goes on the journey at all, since the others are going after medicine anyway (177).

The final step in the evolution of the play occurred when Brecht wrote another version of the story, *Der Neinsager*. This version follows the first *Jasager* until the boy is asked if he agrees to his fate. This time he says no, and the group returns to the village (*JN* 48–50). Yet in this version, as in the previous one, the play is not strictly logical. As Speirs asks, why does the whole group go back? Why does no one continue on the journey to get the mother's medicine (177)? Speirs reads the contradictions inherent in these two plays as failures, unsuccessful attempts by Brecht to establish a legitimate basis for society on purely rational grounds (177).

Now that some of the various, often conflicting voices in Brecht's play have been traced to their sources, the question arises, how aware was Brecht of the complex dynamics of *Der Jasager*? The tensions in this drama might go deeper than he himself ever realized. Perhaps, in trying to write a play that would purely teach the lesson of logical collectivism, of *Einverständnis*, Brecht was defeated by the contradictions of his own personality. But then again, maybe he was more aware of the complexity than some critics would admit. For instance, it seems significant that Brecht did not choose which play, *Der Jasager* or *Der Neinsager*, would represent his final word on the story

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of the valley sacrifice. Rather, he decided that they should be performed together. This decision fits with an idea Brecht expresses in his notebook. The truth of one thing, he says, can only be obtained through comparison with other things. "Die Wahrheit ist nie in einem Satz zu sagen" [Truth cannot be expressed in a single sentence] (*Werke* 21: 428).

Another notebook entry also indicates that the complexity of Brecht's dramas was not merely accidental, but rather an attempt to portray the modern situation: "Die Beziehungen der Menschen unserer Zeit sind unklar" [The relationships between people in our time are unclear] (*Werke* 21: 440). The conflict in *Der Jasager* between different voices is a kind of conflict Brecht was conscious of: "[D]as Schicksal ist keine einheitliche Macht mehr, eher sind Kraftfelder mit entgegenwirkenden Strömungen zu beobachten" [Fate is no longer a unified power; rather, one observes force fields with opposing currents] (*Werke* 21: 303). This image of opposing forces describes perfectly the situation in *Der Jasager* and *Der Neinsager*. When Willett describes Brecht's later works as exhibiting a "special taste for the unresolved incompatibility" and "a delight in contradiction for its own sake" (195), he could just as easily be describing these early dramas.

If a Brecht drama is a battlefield of voices and ideas, the traditional role of the reader becomes inadequate. The reader must be willing to enter into the dialectic of the work. Rather than looking for a logical plot or psychological reality, one must view logic and psychology as only two voices in the discourse. The actions in a play, Brecht says, require neither "logische Begründungen noch psychologische Motivierungen" [logical reasons nor psychological motivations] (*Werke* 21: 440). Likewise, the drama no longer centers itself on ethical systems or human feelings. As Brecht writes in his notes for *Mahagonny*, "Der Text hatte nicht sentimental oder moralisch zu sein, sondern Sentimentalität und Moral zu zeigen" [The text had to be neither sentimental nor moral, but rather to point out sentimentality and morality] (*Werke* 24: 80). Brecht's use of the word *zeigen* here implies that sentiment and morality are no longer essences but gestures, signs on a level with linguistic, musical, and dramatic signs. Thus, the stance of the reader changes from that of a passive recipient to what Brecht describes as a "Forscher" [researcher] (*Werke* 21: 440). Like a researcher, the reader must analyze all the forces at work in a given situation and determine which forces are ascendant, which are regressive. Through such research, the reader will participate in the discourse of the text.

In the program notes to the first performance of *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis*, Brecht explains the purpose of a *Lehrstück:* "[Es] ist zur Selbstverständigung der Autoren and derjenigen, die sich dabei tätig beteiligen, gemacht und nicht dazu, irgendwelchen Leuten ein Erlebnis zu

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sein" [(It) is created for the self-understanding of the author and of those who actively participate, and not to be an experience for just anyone] (*Werke* 24: 90). This definition includes anyone who approaches any of Brecht's works with a critical attitude. The act of reading becomes an act of self-definition in response to the work. Each reader who interacts with *Der Jasager* joins the scene of discourse, a space already occupied by Brecht, German students, Hauptmann, Waley, and an unknown Japanese author. Through this act of joining the conversation, one defines oneself.

In his notebook, Brecht describes this process of self-creation: "'Ich' bin keine Person. Ich entstehe jeden Moment, bleibe keinen. Ich entstehe in der Form einer Antwort" [*I* am no person. I emerge each moment, remain in none. I emerge in the form of an answer.] (*Werke* 21: 404). Thus, the act of writing a play, and of writing the self, is an ever-changing process, a process of colloquy in which identity is created in the act of responding to the innumerable voices already speaking. It is precisely this unending interchange that makes a work of art (or any other product of the human mind) an enduring object. Brecht expresses this idea in a poem entitled "Über die Bauart langdauernder Werke" ["Concerning the Creation of Lasting Works"]:

> Wie lange
> Dauern die Werke? So lange
> Als bis sie fertig sind.
> So lange sie nämlich Mühe machen
> Verfallen sie nicht.
>
> [How long
> Do works last? As long
> As it takes for them to be finished.
> As long, that is, as they take effort,
> They never decline.] (*Gedichte* 3:78, lines 1–5)

NOTE

[1] Waley writes: "Checking his heart which longed for swift return, / At dawn towards the hills he [the boy] dragged his feet" (233). Hauptmann and Brecht change Waley's lines slightly: "Er bezähmte sein Herz, das die schnelle Heimkehr verlangte, und überanstrengte es. Beim Morgengrauen am Fuße der Berge konnte er kaum seine müden Fuße mehr schleppen" [He (the boy) checked his heart, which longed for a quick return home, *and overtaxed it.* At dawn at the foot of the mountains he *could hardly drag his weary feet*] (Hauptmann 16, emphasis added). This and all other translations from the German are mine.

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The Turf Cutter and the Nine-to-Five Man: Heaney, Larkin, and "the Spiritual Intellect's Great Work."

James Booth

Seamus Heaney is haunted by, and in his turn haunts, the spirit of Philip Larkin. In "The Journey Back," the opening poem of *Seeing Things* (1991), he encounters a ghost "Larkin" who describes himself sadly as "A nine-to-five man who had seen poetry" (*ST* 7). The previous year (1990), Heaney had complained that "Aubade," "for all its heart-breaking truths and beauties . . . reneges on what Yeats called 'the spiritual intellect's great work'" (*RP* 158).[1] Then in 1992, Larkin's spirit responded, as it were, from the grave, with his own less formal verdict on Heaney. During his life Larkin avoided public comment on poets whose work he was unable to praise, but the reader of *The Selected Letters* now found that in private he jokily caricatured Heaney as "the Gombeen man" (*SL* 636). The phrase, meaning *usurer,* was employed by Heaney to add exotic color to his evocation of the savage and wily Vikings in *North.* But (as Larkin would have been aware) it persists in Irish colloquial usage to signify a village entrepreneur who lives on his wits at others' expense.[2] Larkin had later written to Amis: "I reckon Heaney and Co. are like where we came in. . . . Boring too-clever stuff, litty and 'historical'" (*SL* 682), and told Anthony Thwaite: "in confidence . . . [Dunn's] things seem heavy to me, no lilt, no ear, no tune. Of course that goes for lots of people—S. Heaney, for one" (*SL* 659). The mischievous reader might thus set against Heaney's Larkin—"A nine-to-five man who had seen poetry"—Larkin's Heaney: "a Gombeen-man who can't hear poetry."

The appearance of Larkin, Dante, and by implication also Eliot in "The

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Journey Back" is illuminated by a passage in Heaney's essay "Envies and Identifications: Dante and the Modern Poet":

> when poets turn to the great masters of the past, they turn to an image of their own creation, one which is likely to be a reflection of their own imaginative needs, their own artistic inclinations and procedures. (5)

Heaney defines his imaginative need in *Seeing Things* as to transcend the "Heaviness of being" which characterized his earlier work, and go beyond "Poetry / Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens." He feels he has discovered in himself, late in life, the ability to "credit marvels" (*ST* 50). This quest for spiritual meanings is not new in his work, but here it becomes more explicit. In this context Dante and Eliot, as acknowledged "great masters" of visionary illumination, offer clear points of envy and identification. The example of Larkin, however, is closer and more problematic.

Heaney has always experienced difficulty in coming to terms with the "spiritual" element in Larkin, to which he has recurred persistently throughout his career. His discussions of Larkin's work are marked by an undertone of concession and reservation. In 1976 he defined him as "the poet of rational light." Larkin's poetry, he said, gives us "the bright senses of words worn clean in literate conversation," whose ancestry lies in the moment "when the Middle Ages are turning secular." Heaney concluded: "It would seem that he has deliberately curtailed his gift for evocation, for resonance, for symbolist *frissons*" (*P* 164–5). In 1982, aware that such a description is scarcely adequate to the author of "Here," "High Windows," and "Absences," he corrected his earlier version, conceding the existence in Larkin's work of "moments which deserve to be called visionary" (*GT* 16):

> Larkin also had it in him to write his own version of the *Paradiso*. It might well have amounted to no more than an acknowledgement of the need to imagine "such attics cleared of me, such absences"; nevertheless, in the poems he has written there is enough reach and longing to show that he did not completely settle for the well-known bargain offer, a poetry of lowered sights and patently diminished expectations." (*GT* 22)

But the sense of disappointment is still palpable ("had it in him," "amounted to *no more than* an acknowledgment," "*enough* reach and longing," "he did not *completely* settle"). This Larkin is spiritually grudging. He offers "the melody of intelligence," refusing to allow "the temptations of melody to chloroform the exactions of his common sense" (*GT* 17). These judgments oddly parallel Larkin's criticisms of Heaney for being "too-clever" and having "no tune."

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In "The Journey Back," Heaney boldly transfers his wrestle with Larkin's spirit from the arena of critical commentary to that of his own poetry. By a startling stroke, the first marvel to test his newfound spiritual credulity in *Seeing Things* is a strangely "litty" ghost-Larkin, who quotes at length from Dante. The context of rush-hour buses, bearing "the drained and laden through the city," also brings to mind Eliot's comparison of the rush hour to Dante's Inferno in *The Waste Land* (62). And "Larkin's" ironic remark, "I might have been a wise king setting out / Under the Christmas lights," evokes the marvel of the infant Christ in Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" (103–4). Eliot, one might recollect, was also "a nine-to-five man." But Larkin hated Christmas, and is no magus. He is setting out "into the heartland of the ordinary" and his quest appears distinctly less visionary than Dante's or Eliot's. Heaney's Larkin may, like the virtuous pagan Virgil, be a suitable guide through Hell and Purgatory but, lacking the True Faith, he will be unable to accompany the poet into Paradise. He may have "seen poetry" but, unlike Dante and Eliot, he will not see marvels.

Heaney's philosophy of reading here is opposite to that advocated by Jeanette Winterson, who exhorts the reader to "engage with a text as you would another human being. To recognize it in its own right, separate, particular, to let it speak in its own voice, not in a ventriloquism of yours" (Winterson 111). Seductive though Heaney's ventriloquism is, his "Larkin" is very much a strategic image of his own intertextual creation, reflecting his own artistic inclinations and procedures. This becomes apparent if we imagine the real Larkin, as it is not difficult to do, describing himself at the end of his life as "A nine-to-five man who had seen poetry." The resonance of the words would be quite different from that which they possess in Heaney's poem. They would convey bitter resignation to the inevitable fading of inspiration. From the lips of Heaney's Dante-quoting "Larkin" they fall as an admission of spiritual failure. Heaney's nest of intertextual boxes ("Larkin," "Eliot," "Dante," Heaney) effectively locks Larkin into an un-Larkinesque poetic ideology.[3]

Heaney's subversion of his English predecessor here is compounded by his Oxford lecture of 1990, "Joy or Night," where his dissatisfaction with Larkin's spiritual failure is at its most explicit. He contrasts Larkin's "daunted," "scientific" attitude toward life and death with Yeats's "undaunted," "creative," "vital" approach (*RP* 163, 160). Yeats's work, Heaney argues:

> fortifies the spirit against assaults from outside and temptations from within—temptations such as the one contained in Larkin's at-

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> tractively defeatist proposition that "Death is no different whined at than withstood." (*RP* 163)

Heaney claims that Yeats asserts, albeit tentatively, a "meaning in life." Larkin's "Aubade" on the other hand "demoralizes the affirmative impulse" (*RP* 153). Its poetry may be beautiful, he says, but its "argument does add weight to the negative side of the scale and tips the balance in favor of chemical law and mortal decline" (*RP* 158). Heaney is aware that he may be accused here of prescribing a poetry of uplifting healthiness. And he himself declares in his introduction that the "redress of poetry" is a poetic rather than an ideological matter. Nevertheless, he insists, this poem constitutes a betrayal of poetry itself:

> The poet who would be most the poet has to attempt an act of writing that outstrips the conditions even as it observes them. The truly creative writer, by interposing his or her perception and expression will transfigure the conditions and effect thereby what I have called the redress of poetry. (*RP* 159)

The secular, scientific, nine-to-five Larkin constructed by Heaney's essays and poem is, for all his poetic ability, lacking the "spiritual proffer" (*RP* 149) of a Dante, an Eliot, or a Yeats. He is not the poet who would be most the poet.

At the root of this quarrel lies a fundamental lack of consonance between the two poets' aesthetic universes. Their poetic practices, as we shall see, reflect mutually exclusive aesthetic principles. Heaney is a religious seeker after emblems; Larkin an existential aesthete. Consequently each considers the other deficient in the essential "spirit" of poetry. Larkin finds Heaney "too-clever" and "litty": an artificial mythifier with "no ear"; Heaney finds Larkin "secular" and "rational": a daunted "nine-to-five man" who, despite visionary glimpses, refuses to "transfigure" experience. In the remainder of this essay I would like to explore this antipathy of poetic spirits, and to compare the poetic transcendence which each poet achieves.

To Larkin poetry was itself the spirit's work, and Heaney's separation between the "argument" of "Aubade" and its "poetry" would have been meaningless. Larkin's art was his secular religion: "art is as near religion as one can get" (qtd. in Booth 15). The early letters to James Sutton express a devotion to "Art for Art's sake." And though his tone and rhetoric changed as he matured, Larkin remained an aesthete, dedicated to recording "the experience. The Beauty" (*RW* 68). The young Larkin's address to his muse in "The Spirit Wooed" (1950?) adopts the tone of a humble "believer":

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Once I believed in you,
    And then you came,
    Unquestionably new, as fame
Had said you were. But that was long ago.

You launched no argument,
    Yet I obeyed, . . .

Grave pristine absolutes
    Walked in my mind:
    So that I was not mute, or blind,
As years before or since. My only crime

Was holding you too dear.
    Was that the cause
    You daily came less near—a pause
Longer than life, if you decide it so? (*CP* 46)

The young poet has still not quite found his voice here. His Wordsworthian inflections and fin de siècle world-weariness suggest an exercise in convention. It is all the more poignantly ironic, therefore, that this poem should so accurately anticipate Larkin's plight a quarter of a century later, when the spirit did finally withdraw.

Heaney, in contrast, never confounds art with religion. His pieties are those of his family and people, rather than his art, and the first words he remembers enjoying, as words, were those of Catholic prayers. On one level he shares his community's indifference to poetry:

> there is indeed some part of me that is entirely unimpressed by the activity, that doesn't dislike it, but it's the generations, I suppose of rural ancestors—not illiterate, but not literary. They, in me, or I, through them, don't give a damn. (qtd. in Haffenden 63)

Heaney feels the need to justify his poetry to the reticent superego personified by the road-surface man of his youth: "The pen's easily handled. Aye, boy, it's a lot lighter than the spade" (qtd. in Parker 62). To Heaney poetry is not a categorically imperative call demanding his service, but a slightly suspect choice of profession, requiring justification.

Larkin sees no fundamental conflict between his vocation and his profession. Rueful though he may have been in 1943 about having to earn his living by "handing out tripey novels to morons," he did not see this, in itself, as a threat to his poetry. His concern was whether this job would give him sufficient time to write:

> I intend to devote myself to writing and doing my boring job with-

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> out enthusiasm or slackness. I only took it on account of being able to write in the intervals: it's not so easy, I must say, but it[']s possible. (qtd. in Booth 18)

Later in life, this initial doubt long dispelled, he concluded that librarianship had been an "inspired" choice. The epithet is carefully chosen. His nine-to-five job gave him financial security and ensured that he would not be compelled to force his muse. "I've never been didactic, never tried to make poetry do things, never gone out to look for it. I waited for it to come to me, in whatever shape it chose" (*RW* 74). Being a librarian enabled him to "wait for it to come," to attend the spirit's call.

Heaney, in contrast, felt compelled to prove himself as a poet by abandoning his post at Queen's University in 1972 in order to live in County Wicklow by his writing:

> I felt there was something terrifically enabling and freeing about the risks and exposure of living in Wicklow in that way, and you had to prove yourself . . . you had to feel . . . that you had verified your life. Somehow when you get onto the cushions of a salaried position, that neediness and sense of danger disappears. (qtd. in Corcoran 36)

There is even a hint that poetry might not have held Heaney's commitment without this risk and danger; his impulse to write might have diminished on the cushions of a salaried position. In contrast, when the young Larkin fantasized about retiring to the Mediterranean on his novel profits, the main attraction of the dream was that he would be free to do nothing but write. Even the most technical and purely literary developments in Heaney's art are, not infrequently, motivated by a calculated judgment, a sense that he needs to "move on in his career." He said of his new style in *Field Work* (1979): "I very deliberately set out to lengthen the line again because the narrow line was becoming habit" (Randall 16). Larkin was never a professional poet in this sense.

While the tradition of the English lyric was Larkin's spiritual home, Heaney's home is elsewhere. The suspicion of literature which he learned from the road-surface man was intensified by the "force-feeding" of his first contact with "the classic canon of English poetry" (*P* 26). The devious "banter" developed by Ulster Catholics in their dealings with Loyalists influenced his attitude toward the English language, while Philip Hobsbawm, his teacher at Queen's University, encouraged him to write poems in the rough, "anti-gentility" vein promoted by Alvarez's *The New Poetry*. Thus, while the early poetic influences on Larkin were the unembarrassed Romantic rhetoric of Yeats, the lyric emotiveness of Hardy, and the verbal flair of early

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Auden, the early influences on Heaney were the knotty experiments of Hopkins, the epiphanies of Kavanagh, and the organicism of early Hughes.

These influences complicate Heaney's lyric voice. He is constantly "dicing with embarrassment," using local or unpoetic idioms to capture an authentic local quality (O'Donoghue 45). Conversely, lyric elevation always seems to be in invisible inverted commas. The ingenuous, "aureate" literariness of some of his work sounds deliberately awkward:

> I love its blooms like saucers brimmed with meal,
> Its berries a swart caviar of shot,
> A buoyant spawn, a light bruised out of purple.
> Elderberry? It is shires dreaming wine.
> Boortree is bowertree . . . (*FW* 37)

In *North* (1975), Heaney determined to go beyond mere embarrassment to out-and-out revolution: "I thought that that music, the melodious grace of the English iambic line, was some kind of affront, that it needed to be wrecked." Later he softened, yielding to a provisional affection for the English literary tradition, "a learning to trust melody, to trust art as reality, to trust artfulness as an affirmation" (Kinahan 412). But he never loses his sense that "the best music in the world is the music of what happens" (*P* 14). Even in *Seeing Things* (1991), a radical suspicion of his poetic medium persists:

> Sink every impulse like a bolt. Secure
> The bastion of sensation. Do not waver
> Into language. Do not waver in it. (ST 56)

Heaney's attitude goes beyond the political distrust of an Irish writer for English. His is the distrust of a turf cutter for language itself.

Thus his characterization of "Digging" as "a big coarse-grained navvy of a poem" (*P* 43) sounds less like a shamefaced concession than a proud boast—evidence that he has achieved his aim of vying with the admired turf cutters of his youth, by using his poetry to "dig." The poem's "vivid stumblings" (Simmons 41), guarantee its ingenuous authenticity. Instead of poetic elevation Heaney provides the simple rhetoric of a list. Adjective-plus-noun constructions clog the poem as wet peat clogs the boots: "squat pen," "rasping sound," "gravelly ground," "straining rump," "coarse boot," "tall tops," "bright edge," "cool hardness," "good turf," "cold smell," "soggy peat," "curt cuts," "living roots," "squat pen." And the larger gestures of the poem are couched in a homespun rural idiom: "By God, the old man could handle a spade," "But I've no spade to follow men like them" (*DN* 13–14).[4]

While Larkin obeys the siren call of the spirit to pursue Beauty, Heaney

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rolls up his sleeves and digs. Lacking a spade, he may not be able to achieve his father's and grandfather's primitive authenticity, but he will still dig, if in a more archaeological or (horti)cultural sense. He sees poetry "as a dig, a dig for finds which end up by being plants" (*P* 41).[5] And these imaginative "finds" vie with peat itself in their substantial solidity. He shows the same "piety towards objects" that he so admired in P. V. Glob's book on the ancient corpses retrieved from peat bogs (Morrison 46). When Heaney describes blackberries, a settle bed, a pitchfork, the poetry is often only marginally more elaborate in form than the bare naming process itself. A thesaurus list of synonyms becomes a religious chant:

> Rivetted steel, turned timber, burnish, grain,
> Smoothness, straightness, roundness, length and sheen.
> Sweat-cured, sharpened, balanced, tested, fitted.
> The springiness, the clip and dart of it. (*ST* 23)

A frequent feature in such lists, as here, is the use of full stops instead of commas within a grammatically sequential sentence (after *sheen* and *fitted*). This denial of syntactical structure serves to concentrate the poem on irreducible things. The music of "what happens" becomes the music of "what is."

For Heaney, then, the writing of poetry is less a matter of composition than of discovery. The poem's "making," its embodiment in syntactical progressions and metrical forms, is a less intrinsically poetic action than the initial revelation of its subject, or object. "The crucial action" in the inception of a poem is "pre-verbal." Heaney quotes Robert Frost to the effect that poetry arises from a "lump in the throat," and continues:

> As far as I am concerned, technique is more vitally and sensitively connected with that first activity where "the lump in the throat" finds "the thought" than with "the thought" finding "the words." The first emergence involves the divining, vatic, oracular function; the second, the making function. To say, as Auden did, that a poem is a "verbal contraption" is to keep one or two tricks up your sleeve. (*P* 49)

It is this organicist theory which lies behind Heaney's way of treating words themselves as things—as icons of reality rather than signifiers. In "The Singer's House" he says to himself the placename "Gweebarra":

> and its music hits off the place
> like water hitting off granite.
> I see the glittering sound. (*FW* 27)

Elsewhere "The tawny guttural water" of the Moyola river "spells itself" (*WO* 25). The poet seeks to plumb a pre-Saussurean depth where words enter

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"almost the sense of touch" (*FW* 34) and embody meaning in their very physical form. In the case of the poem "Undine," for example:

> It was the dark pool of the sound of the word that first took me: if our auditory imaginations were sufficiently attuned to plumb and sound a vowel, to unite the most primitive and civilized associations, the word "undine," would probably suffice as a poem in itself. (*P* 52–3)

The intrinsic music of the single word is valued above the contrived music of syntax and meter.

If the word can be seen as an icon, so can the whole poem. This explains many of Heaney's formal experiments. The "skinny quatrains" of *North*, for instance, devised when Heaney was attempting to "wreck" "the melodious grace of the English iambic line," show Heaney's antisyntactical tendency at its most ruthless. While the traditional lyric stanza is designed for the ear, these stanzas are designed for the eye. The purely visual structuring of the poems becomes apparent if the words are set out as prose:

> I step through origins like a dog turning its memories of wilderness on the kitchen mat: the bog floor shakes, water cheeps and lisps as I walk down rushes and heather. I love this turf-face. (*N* 33)

Developing his digging metaphor, Heaney sees these stanzas as "artesian" wells: "those thin small quatrain poems, they're kind of drills or augers for turning in and they are narrow and long and deep" (qtd. in Randall 16). But, though individual words may generate an instantaneous musical effect ("cheeps," "lisps"), there is no *structure* of sounds here. The traditional devices for creating such a structure (rhyme, predictable stress-patterns) have been deliberately dispensed with. Even a listener with an excellent ear for poetry could not guess what length the lines are supposed to be, and might conclude that this is in reality prose-poetry, or possibly approximate pentameters.[6] There is nothing in the meter, the sounds of the words, or their grammatical and syntactical structures to give a clue to Heaney's "narrow and long" lineation:

> I step through origins
> like a dog turning
> its memories of wilderness
> on the kitchen mat:
>
> the bog floor shakes,
> water cheeps and lisps
> as I walk down
> rushes and heather.
>
> I love this turf-face . . .

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The drill or auger that appears on the page in this arrangement is as exclusively visual an effect as the wings, altar, or waterfall of the seventeenth-century poets Herbert and Vaughan. This is an extreme case of Heaney's tendency to value the "concrete accomplishment of writing over the evanescence of speech" (Hart 38). Typography generates poetic form.

Even though the "Dantesque" tercets used in four of the sections of "Station Island" (*SI* 61–94) and in the "Squarings" sequence in *Seeing Things* (51–108) date from a time when Heaney's attitude toward the lyric tradition was less extreme, they show similar features. The audible narrative flow of terza rima, with its interwoven rhymes (aba bcb cdc *etc.*) disappears with the general abandonment of the middle rhyme of each tercet, leaving (usually) a half-rhyme on the first and third lines. If the ear succeeds in picking up the pararhymes, what is heard is a sequence of baggy couplets of irregular line length. In the "Squarings" sequence, the "tercet" divisions are even more purely typographical since rhyme is absent, and stanzas are regularly enjambed into each other. O'Donoghue asserts: "Heaney's terza rima seems to me to be his most impressive achievement in poetic form" (99), though how a sequence of lines pararhymed intermittently, or not rhymed at all, can be called terza rima, remains unclear. Heaney's experiments here, like the most uncompromising forms of twelve-tone music, appeal to the intellect rather than to the ear.

It is notable, then, that Heaney presents us with a "Larkin" who "had seen poetry," while Larkin accuses Heaney's work of having "no lilt, no ear, no tune." For Larkin, poetry is a matter not of things found or seen, but of speech heard. Without keeping any cards up his sleeve, he adapts Auden's "contraption" formula: "to write a poem is to construct a verbal device that [will] preserve an experience indefinitely by reproducing it in whoever reads the poem" (*RW* 83). Rather than anchoring his poems in word-icons, he spins webs of signifiers, fixed in place by carefully constructed devices of meter, grammar, syntax, and rhyme: "When you write a poem, you put everything into it that's needed: the reader should 'hear' it just as clearly as if you were in the room saying it to him" (*RW* 61). Larkin's is not a music of "what is"—of the intrinsic significances of things. It is a music of dramatized moods, attitudes, and states of being. His poetry is not about horses, but about being at grass, not about a newborn lamb, but about first sight, not about the East Riding, but about here. It is not even, really, about a tomb or ambulances, but about our almost-instinct, or the sudden shut of loss. It is about wants, or reference back, or absences, or the view.

A comparison between poems will illustrate this difference. Larkin's

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"Home Is So Sad" (*CP* 119) and Heaney's "Old Pewter" (*SI* 22) both treat an intimate domestic theme, focusing on everyday objects. Their poetic strategies are, however, quite different. Larkin's poem begins by lightly contradicting a familiar cliché (that home is sweet), and goes on, with playful pathos, to personify the universal emotional abstraction "home": "It stays as it was left, / Shaped to the comfort of the last to go / As if to win them back." In contrast, Heaney's poem stresses local socio-historical implications through specific visual details. "Not the age of silver" identifies pewter as a dull, third-class metal. Its smooth greyness is seen, with deliberate overalliterative awkwardness, as "a slither / of illiteracy under rafters." A plethora of descriptive epithets follows: "a dented hand-me-down old smoky plate / full of blizzards, sullied and temperate." The poet celebrates the homely, scuffed pewter in itself and also as symbol of the humble, rural community for which it stands.

Larkin's poem artfully leads the reader through a series of emotional intensifications. The conversational tone deepens into anxiety as the "bereft" home "withers." The rhetoric becomes grander and more emotive; the home is "A joyous shot at how things ought to be / Long fallen wide." And the poem ends with a dramatized address to the reader:

> You can see how it was;
> Look at the pictures and the cutlery.
> The music in the piano stool. That vase.[7] (CP 119)

As in Yeats's "Long-legged Fly," the reader is drawn bodily into the scene by an artificial apostrophe. The faintly insistent wording ("You can see how it was; Look . . .") perhaps betrays a histrionic sorrow holding itself back beneath the downbeat tone. Then, with transparent virtuosity, the poem's emotion is distilled into a verbless two-word sentence: "That vase." Larkin's cutlery, stool, and vase are real and tangible enough, but unlike Heaney's pewter, neither their Hopkinsian "thisness" nor their specific social implications are intrinsic to the poem. They stand by metonymy for a universal yearning of the human spirit: the Platonic form of Home-Sweet-Home. Everyone tries to make a home of some kind, whether their vase is Ming or a present from Scarborough.

Where Larkin's poem enacts a familiar human drama, Heaney's poem slowly fills up with detailed visual images until it overflows into moral reflection. In place of Larkin's deceptively detached third-person we have ingenuous personal enthusiasm. Pewter belongs to that kitty of corroborative things ("this turf-face," elderflowers, "slub silk," "hushed air") which merit Heaney's recurrent formula, "I love": "I love unshowy pewter." A list of visually similar substances follows: "solder / that weeps at the touch of a hot

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iron," and "gloss-barked alder // reflected in the nebulous lid of a pool" (the lid of a tankard presumably recalls the circle of water). The sequence of images here—pewter, solder, alder, lid, pool—is governed by the spontaneous flow of the poet's meditation. The tone becomes more pensive when the poet recalls himself as a boy hiding one misty winter day while his family thought he had drowned. Then in the final stanza the visual description reveals its full spiritual meaning:

> Glimmerings are what the soul's composed of.
> Fogged up challenges, far conscience-glitters
> And hang-dog, half-truth earnests of true love.
> And a whole late-flooding thaw of ancestors. (*SI* 22)

The effect is based on a clever zeugma; both pewter and the soul can "glimmer," be "fogged up" or "glitter." So, the poet is not only celebrating his Irish ancestors through his meditation on pewter. More profoundly and irreducibly, the metal's cloudy, flawed thisness stands for a universal spiritual quality. As Michael Parker says: "The pewter becomes an emblem of the soul and its imperfections" (188).

Parker's epithet points to the poetic tradition to which the spiritual allegory of "Old Pewter" belongs: that of the emblem. Heaney frequently recurs to his seventeenth-century emblematic forerunners. Herbert's "The Pulley" is lovingly analyzed in the first of the Oxford lectures, a line of Vaughan begins "Squarings xliv" (*ST* 104). Traherne is mentioned in "Hailstones" (*HL* 14). Like the emblem poems of these writers, "Old Pewter" offers a description of precise physical exactitude which at the same time sustains a transparent spiritual allegory. In Marvell's "On a Drop of Dew," for instance, the "Orient Dew, / Shed from the Bosom of the Morn," stands for the soul, dropped from the "orient" (eastern) sunrise of eternity, into the profane world below, and longs for the Sun (Christ) to "exhale it back" to heaven (Marvell 7). Other seventeenth-century poets make similar spiritual emblems out of a flower (Herbert), a waterfall (Vaughan), or a pond (Traherne). Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" are later variants of this pattern, as are Patrick Kavanagh's brilliant epiphanies:

> Green, blue, yellow and red
> God is down in the swamps and marshes
> Sensational as April and almost incredible the flowering of our catharsis. (Kavanagh 159)

The seventeenth-century emblematists were searching nature, like Hopkins and Kavanagh after them, for something that is already there, namely God. And though Heaney is "not what you'd call a pious Catholic" (Haffenden

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60), and his emblems are Jungian as much as Christian, his poetry still aims at the natural spirituality of a past age when it was believed that God had hidden hieroglyphics and riddles in his creation for his creatures to seek out. At one extreme Heaney's emblems carry a totally implicit spiritual charge: "The wet centre is bottomless" (*DD* 56). Alternatively, the emblematic tradition manifests itself, as in "Old Pewter," in a modern version of "metaphysical" wit. "The Riddle," for instance, recalls poems by Herbert or Traherne, with its whimsical, punning title (it concerns a garden sieve or riddle). Its argument is unmistakably, if elusively, theological: "Which would be better, what sticks or what falls through? / Or does the choice itself create the value" (*HL* 51). Some may feel that in this case the poet has mistaken facile whimsy for spiritual questioning. In "The Spoonbait" he achieves more gravity by affecting the tones of an archaic sermon:

> So a new similitude is given us
> And we say: The soul may be compared
>
> Unto a spoonbait that a child discovers
> Beneath the sliding lid of a pencil case . . .

It is "a toy of light / Reeled through him upstream, snagging on nothing" (*HL* 21). In the seventeenth century this subject would have been developed into an explicit allegory of God angling for souls. In Heaney's poem the spiritual message is conveyed by an impressionistic image of the spoon flashing upstream. But the impulse is the same: to see sermons in hedges and streams.

The more visionary vein of *The Haw Lantern* and *Seeing Things* is a natural development of this emblematic manner. In "parables about crossing from the domain of the matter-of-fact into the domain of the imagined," Heaney explores "the way consciousness can be alive to two different and contradictory dimensions of reality" (*RP* xiii). Thus a wintry haw "burning" in a hedge becomes a "litty" spiritual symbol, as it

> takes the roaming shape of Diogenes
> with his lantern, seeking one just man;
> so you end up scrutinized from behind the haw
> he holds up at eye-level on its twig. (*HL* 7)

And in "Wheels within Wheels" the poet gains a "grip . . . on things" from the spinning wheel of an upturned bicycle, "as if belief / Caught up and spun the objects of belief / Into an orbit coterminous with longing" (*ST* 46–7). Even in this secular context what the poet learns from things is still a distinctly theological "belief."

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Eclectically adventurous as Larkin was in genre and form, it is inevitable that he too should, on occasion, have written poems in the emblematic vein. He even composed iconic poems, with a similar patterning to the wings and altars of the seventeenth century, though in his case the effect is "preserved" in rhyme and syntax, rather than imposed by typography. "As Bad as a Mile" with its aaa bbb rhyme scheme and single-sentence structure, makes a comic little emblem out of the poet's lack of a "grip on things." The "shied core" misses the basket, and "failure" spreads "back up the arm" in a weird slow-motion reversal, ending with "the apple unbitten in the palm" (*CP* 125). A more elaborate pattern underlies "Wires," where the second stanza winds back the rhyme of the first: abcd dcba. The young steers recoil from the electric shock (both d rhymes are the same word, *wires,* as though a two-strand electric fence straddled the middle of the poem), and find themselves forever trapped behind the "fences" of their "senses" (the a rhymes).

In both these poems the playful element of the emblem tradition is to the fore. It is "The Trees" (*CP* 166) which comes closest to the spiritual intensity characteristic of the more serious examples of the genre. It is not surprising therefore that Heaney should single out this poem in his "Joy or Night" lecture, praising its celebration of "the opulence and oceanic vitality of leafy trees, their lush power to revivify both themselves and us, year after year" (*RP* 155). But Heaney's description sounds suspiciously like a poem by Heaney rather than one by Larkin. He is responding to the spiritual yearning of the poem, while ignoring its emotional syntax. The tone is, in fact, ambiguous from the beginning:

> The trees are coming into leaf,
> Like something almost being said.
> The recent buds relax and spread.
> Their greenness is a kind of grief.

The surprisingly emotive "grief" here expresses (like "April is the cruellest month") the poet's intensified sense of unease amid the renewal of spring. Nevertheless the poet searches for the trees' spiritual allegory in the authentic tones of an emblematic poet:

> Is it that they are born again
> And we grow old? No, they die too.
> Their yearly trick of looking new
> Is written down in rings of grain. (*CP* 166)

But Larkin denies the theological security traditionally offered by the emblem. It seems sentimentally easy to him ("No, they die too"). So when in

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the final stanza the poet returns to the "spiritual proffer" of the trees it is in a very provisional context. Their renewed greenness is a "yearly trick." Nevertheless the trees do perform their emblematic function and the poem ends with a positive lesson. The trick works, though it is transparently clear that it is only the poem's rhetoric that makes it work. Larkin adopts a—for him—unusually simple mimetic assonance to underline the emotional ingenuousness of his message: "Last year is dead they seem to say. / Begin afresh, afresh, afresh." The ambiguity is radical. The imperative mood ("Begin") could even be read, on one level, as a threat. "The Trees" is as much an antiemblematic poem as an emblematic one. Larkin, indeed, seems to have felt uncomfortable with its fervent tone. In the manuscript he wrote after the last line "Bloody awful tripe." Only those deaf to the emotional drama of the printed text will feel that this addition in any way spoils the poem's exquisite evocation of spring.

Where "Old Pewter" and "The Spoonbait" aim at the spiritual insight of the emblem, "The Trees" dramatizes a tension between the desire for spiritual consolation and an acknowledgment that it is unattainable. The poem enacts experience rather than expounding wisdom. For Larkin the spirit of poetry is aesthetic and emotional; for Heaney it is theological. This difference is illustrated by the two poets' treatment of religion. Larkin's denial of religion in "Aubade" contains no theological argument; rather it is a miniature emotional drama:

> Religion used to try,
> That vast, moth-eaten musical brocade
> Created to pretend we never die . . . (*CP* 208)

The sudden pause after "vast," together with the reversal of the iamb in the following foot :

> x / | / x|x
> That vast, moth-eaten . . .

gives an inflection of exasperated sadness. Awe is not quite dispelled by bathos. An unexpected third epithet, "musical," intensifies the emotional confusion (what can be both moth-eaten and musical?) until "brocade" restores sense. Religion is imaged as a vast ecclesiastical stole, woven of music—pathetic, but still beautiful in its uselessness. "Created" in the next line (where the dismissive "invented" might be expected) hints at respect for religion as a "creation" of the human spirit, but also implies that "the Creator" is actu-

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ally the creation of man. The tripping t alliteration in "Created to pretend" is softly dismissive, and also itself "musical."

In comparison, Heaney's "Squarings xlvi" sounds theologically rigorous. It takes its stand not on enacted emotion, but on scrupulous metaphysical, and "metaphysical," argument. Heaney establishes a more philosophical context than Larkin. He hears the sound of a fiddle over the fields, "like a flat stone skimmed . . . / Still fleeing behind space," and reflects:

> Was music once a proof of God's existence?
> As long as it admits things beyond measure,
> That supposition stands. (*ST* 106)

Heaney's tone is starkly rational compared with Larkin's clash of contradictory associations ("vast, moth-eaten, musical"). His lines are clear glass, Larkin's stained.[8] The unanswerable question in the first line might seem naïve. (Well, *was* it?) And a nostalgic indicative ("Once, music seemed a proof of God's existence") would certainly be more emotive. But such emotion, for Heaney, would be a diversion.

As in Larkin's lines iambic regularity is broken for effect:

> x / |x / |x / | / x| x / |(x)
> As long as it admits things beyond measure,

The phrase "things beyond measure" breaks the meter (or "measure"), reversing the iamb to imitate the transcendence being described and throw emphasis onto "things." But this effect is apprehended intellectually, not (as in "vast, moth-eaten . . .") as an expressionistic distortion forced upon the poet by his feelings. The reversed foot forms part of Heaney's theological argument that music intimates spiritual insights by breaking the technicalities of meter. This argument has a "metaphysical" exactitude very characteristic of Heaney (though, of course, some highly spiritual music does not break strict measure at all). The final statement just holds back from asserting the existence of God. It remains a "supposition," albeit a supposition that "stands." Thus where Larkin dramatizes exasperated rejection, Heaney states considered acceptance. Larkin's is the music of emotion; Heaney's the more awkward and severe music of spiritual teaching. The paradox is that, despite what they are saying, Larkin's atheistic lines will evoke more warmth toward religion in most readers than do Heaney's tentatively faithful lines. Moreover, Larkin's vivid emotionality of response seems catholic if not Catholic, while Heaney's austerity has something of the puritanism usually associated with Protestant culture.

Fear of death is central to Larkin's conception of religion. Heaney, in contrast, subsumes the immortality of the soul into the larger spiritual cat-

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egory of "things beyond measure." Heaney's own poetry consistently transcends death. His own death does not concern him, and he never contemplates death as a theme in itself. In his elegies Heaney sees it as his duty not to be daunted. At the point of highest elegiac emotion in "The Strand at Lough Beg" he still has an eye for the inscape of the moss with which he wipes his murdered cousin's blood: "I dab you clean with moss / Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud" (*FW* 18). Were his aim primarily to evoke grief this might seem a distraction. But Heaney is more concerned to stress the active participation of moss and reeds in his imaginative resurrection of his cousin. The reed scapulars that he weaves—since reeds "shoot green again"—constitute an emblem of rebirth.[9] Such corroborative undertones are the key to Heaney's elegies. In "Clearances 3," for instance, he focuses on an emblem of the domestic life he shared with his mother:

> I remembered her head bent towards my head
> Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives
> Never closer the whole rest of our lives. (*HL* 27)

Rather than directly lamenting her death, the poet moves the reader by celebrating his relationship with her. In contrast Larkin, in "An April Sunday brings the snow" stresses the bitter fact of loss. His father is no longer here, and "will not eat" the jam he has made:

> Behind the glass, under the cellophane
> Remains your final summer, sweet
> And meaningless, and not to come again. (*CP* 21)

Where Heaney's mere memory of the potatoes stands as a lasting emblem of shared solidarity, Larkin's jam, which actually remains, stands as a relic of irredeemable loss.

Larkin's dauntedness in the face of death blasphemes against Heaney's poetics:

> ["Aubade"], for me, is the definitive post-Christian English poem, one that abolishes the soul's traditional pretension to immortality and denies the Deity's immemorial attribute of infinite personal concern. (*RP* 156)

The intensifying adjectives indicate Heaney's dismay at Larkin's denial of traditional, immemorial belief. But it is not as unprecedented as he makes it sound. A rich English tradition of atheistic lyricism bases itself on this denial, from Rochester's "Satire on Mankind" ("Huddled in dirt the reas'ning engine lies, / Who was so proud, so witty and so wise") to Arnold's "Dover Beach," Hardy's "After the Last Breath," and Housman's "Tell me not here":

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> For nature, heartless, witless nature
> Will neither care nor know
> What stranger's feet may find the meadow
> And trespass there and go,
> Nor ask amid the dews of morning
> If they are mine or no. (Housman 141)

For these writers spiritual truth is attainable only through the abandonment of traditional religious faith.

For Heaney, however, the work of the spiritual intellect depends on a belief, however provisional, in "the soul's traditional pretension to immortality." He praises Yeats, for instance, for deflecting questions about the afterlife with a laugh, thus allowing "the venturesomeness of a supernatural faith to co-exist with a rigorously sceptical attitude" (*RP* 151; scepticism is evidently not venturesome). Heaney is insistent that "we must imagine Yeats as the reader in eternity who resists Philip Larkin's 'Aubade.'" But are Yeats and Larkin the poetic opposites that Heaney claims them to be? The answer must depend on an understanding of Heaney's "Yeats," who turns out on examination to be as much an "image of [his] own creation" as his "Larkin."

Heaney argues that "The Cold Heaven" affords a "spiritual proffer" denied by "Aubade" (*RP* 149). This is a bold claim. On the face of it, "The Cold Heaven" records a wholly bleak spasm of guilt. Indeed, the poet savagely questions the consolation of scripture, speculating that the promised Judgment will be an unjust one:

> Ah! When the ghost begins to quicken,
> Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent
> Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
> By the injustice of the skies for punishment? (Yeats 62)

Heaney argues that though a "personal God" may have disappeared in this poem, nevertheless "The spirit still suffers from a sense of answerability, of responsibility, to a something out there, an intuited element that is as credible as the 'rook-delighting heaven' itself." And it is this answerability (albeit to an unjust judge) which, in Heaney's view, gives the poem the "spiritual illumination" which "Aubade" lacks (*RP*, 148–9).

Heaney insists that this "positive . . . commitment" is fully embodied in Yeats's poetry. "[S]tylistic excellence and . . . spiritual proffer converge":

> When, in one place the verb "to quicken" is rhymed with "stricken" and still manages to hold its own against it, and when, in another, the rhyme word "season" sets its chthonic reliability against the potentially debilitating force of "reason"—when such things occur, the

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> art of the poem is functioning as a corroboration of the positive emotional and intellectual commitments of the poet. (*RP* 149)

But this analysis disregards the context of the poem. As Yeats uses it, the word "quicken" is ominous; the soul is quickened only to be stricken by the injustice of the skies. It is difficult to see in what sense "quicken" holds its own against "stricken" here. Moreover the "chthonic reliability" which Heaney detects in "season" and the "debilitating" implication he finds in "reason" are figments of his imagination:

> and left but memories, that should be out of season
> With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
> And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,
> Until I cried and trembled . . . (Yeats 125)

Both words indicate a normality which the poet's unseasonable, irrational guilt has broken. In Heaney's organicist lexicon, however, the word-icons "season" and "reason" are opposites: one chthonic, the other debilitating. Intent on "the spiritual upbeat of Yeats's rhymes," he fails to hear their actual signification. He concludes that the poem "suggests that there is an overall purpose to life; and it does so by the intrinsically poetic action of its rhymes, its rhythms, and its exultant intonation" (*RP* 149). This is wrong. "The Cold Heaven" does not suggest an overall purpose to life, nor is its intonation exultant. It records a spasm of despair, and its intonation is anguished. It is not an earnest meditation on last things; it is a vivid mood-piece.[10]

Heaney sees the poet as unearthing preexistent spiritual truth. In contrast Yeats and Larkin see the spirit's work as aesthetic creation. They are romantic Neoplatonists dreaming the unattainable. For Yeats the dream takes the form of "love lost long ago," Byzantium, or "what vanishes"; for Larkin it takes the form of "that much-mentioned brilliance, love," "how life should be," or "attics cleared of me" (*CP* 113, 44, 49). Their imagery is apparently antithetical: Yeats's exotic and romantic, Larkin's familiar and realistic. Yeats is an egotist, whereas Larkin's transcendent images frequently involve "a sublime self-forgetting" (Swarbrick 40). Larkin, moreover, expressed disillusion with "that shit Yeats, farting out his histrionic rubbish" (qtd. in Watt 175). But the violence of his disappointment is that of a passionate lover. Despite the differences of rhetoric it is still Yeatsian Beauty that enthralls him.

Since "Words alone are certain good" (Yeats 7), all that the Neoplatonic idealist can offer in palliation of inevitable extinction is poetic eloquence. This eloquence may amount, as in "Aubade," to no more than the cool com-

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posure of a blackly humorous witticism ("Being brave / Lets no one off the grave"), or an unflinching evocation of the awesomeness of death itself:

> the total emptiness for ever,
> The sure extinction that we travel to
> And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
> Not to be anywhere,
> And soon . . . (*CP* 207–8)

Heaney shows some understanding of this poetic mode when he allows that, despite its daunted argument, "Aubade" "rebels at limit." "In this fundamentally artistic way," he concedes, "Larkin's 'Aubade' does not go over to the side of the adversary" (*RP* 158), though mere poetic eloquence is, in the last resort, not fundamental enough to satisfy the Irish poet. But the rhetoric of "Aubade" is of a uniquely exposed kind. It is a poem that walks unusually naked. More usually the Neoplatonist poem clothes itself, as do Keats's Odes, in beautiful images of perfection, or permanence. Such images are never more than deceptions, which last only as long as the poem ("Was it a vision, or a waking dream?") But this is all that the poet can, in spiritual honesty, offer. The parallel masterpieces on the subject of senility, "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Old Fools," both adopt original forms of this pattern, and a comparison between them will throw light on the true relationship between Yeats and Larkin.

The similarities between the two poems are evident. Each dramatizes the poet's quarrel with himself for growing old. Both focus on the maundering fantasies of senility, by which the old try to evade "this absurdity . . . this caricature, / Decrepit age" (Yeats 194). It is the angle of presentation of their respective fantasies that differs. Yeats remains at the center of his poem, the dramatized protagonist of a triumph of will. He stamps his foot and snaps "That is no country for old men," as though he were leaving the world of "those dying generations" of his own accord, out of distaste for its inadequacy. His imaginative journey has a second-childhood petulance about it, caught in the sing-song of a nursery-rhyme: "And therefore I have sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium" (Yeats 193). He compensates in a familiar way for the disabilities of age by claiming to be wiser than the young. The more decrepit he becomes the louder his soul will sing. It is a vivid and satisfying self-projection.

In contrast, the maundering of Larkin's poem is depicted from outside, and with grim realism. The poet is not the romantic hero of the work, nor are the old fools sublime egotists. It is notable, however, that Larkin uses the same rhetorical strategy as Yeats in presenting senility, with faux naïveté, as a voluntary choice. The poet claims bafflement at the old fools'

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behavior. Why, he asks, should they, with the experience of age behind them, choose to "keep on pissing [themselves]?" "Do they somehow suppose / It's more grown-up?" Where Yeats's naïveté served to poeticize the tatters of mortal decrepitude into a triumphant spirituality, Larkin's ironically stresses the involuntary incontinence of age, a state which Yeats never allows himself to contemplate. Nevertheless, despite the differences, the faux naïf posture fulfills a similar emotional function in both poems. Both Yeats's fantastical self-assertion and Larkin's horrified jibes dramatize the poets' intense desire to dissociate themselves from the physical ignominy of age.

The climax of each poem presents a beautiful image of transcendence—the "aged man" transforms himself into a golden bird perched on a bough, the "old fools" lose themselves in the rooms of their minds under extinction's alp. Again the poems offer variations on essentially the same poetic pattern, despite the difference of tone. It is not that Yeats provides spiritual proffer and Larkin denies it, but rather that Yeats's romantic rhetoric is unabashed, while Larkin's is disguised as grim realism. Yeats's employs a "loud lyer" hyperbole that all but drowns out the lie itself, a strategy also used by Donne ("Death be not proud . . .") and Keats ("Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!"). Unwilling to face the reality of death, Yeats "masks" it, to use Heaney's term, in rhetorical euphemism. He is not dying, but ascending out of nature by some ingenious process of self-reincarnation:

> Once out of nature I shall never take
> My bodily form from any natural thing,
> But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
> Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past, or passing, or to come. (Yeats 194)

Larkin's image of transcendence makes explicit the sadness hidden below the surface of Yeats's more fulsome version by presenting itself as incoherent dream rather than sublime vision. But it is, nonetheless, still the same kind of beautiful evasion as Yeats's. Larkin still belongs to the Romantic, Neoplatonic tradition, even as he breaks with it (Rácz 113). The unexpectedly poignant beauty into which the old fools' maunderings modulate reveals that their "lighted rooms" and the aged man's Byzantium are rhetorically parallel. "Grave pristine absolutes" walk in these old fools' minds, just as they walked in that of their creator a quarter of a century earlier:

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> Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms
> Inside your head, and people in them, acting.
> People you know, yet can't quite name; each looms
> Like a deep loss restored, from known doors turning,
> Setting down a lamp, smiling from a stair, extracting
> A known book from the shelves; or sometimes only
> The rooms themselves, chairs and a fire burning,
> The blown bush at the window, or the sun's
> Faint friendliness on the wall some lonely
> Rain-ceased midsummer evening. (*CP* 197)

Like Yeats's poet, the old fools escape their lot by ascending "out of nature," to a country of the mind where their decrepitude, and the flux of time itself, are transcended. The aged man lives on a golden bough, chanting of "what is past, or passing, or to come"; the old fools live "where all happened once." Both poems are essentially Keatsian Odes to Senility, creating beautiful visions out of intolerable reality. Neither provides "spiritual proffer" in Heaney's sense. "Man is in love, and loves what vanishes. / What more is there to say?"

Part of Heaney "is entirely unimpressed by poetry." He doesn't "give a damn" about it; hence his creative, if rather "litty" enthusiasm for "illiteracy" (Haffenden 71). His poetic theory and practice are characterized by deliberate "mistakings," intended to place poetry in the service of a preverbal spiritual insight. Thus he "mistakes" his pen for the revered spade of his ancestors. He mistakes lists of words for poems, on the basis that words are primal icons of things. He mistakes typography for poetic form in order to wreck the melodious grace of the English lyric line. He mistakes consonants for English imperial control and vowels for "Irish pieties" (*P* 37). All these mistakings—whether the reader has patience with them or not—are calculated, even clever poetic strategies, designed to create an awkward and original poetic voice. But Heaney also makes simpler mistakes. In his own poems he often confuses "spiritual proffer" with poetry, or, rather, he prefers spiritual "proffer" to poetry. And his criticism of those earlier poets whom he envies, or with whom he identifies, is marred by the simplest of all critical errors: subjective misreading and the evaluation of poems on the basis of their "argument" rather than their poetry. Thus, driven by his "own imaginative needs" and "artistic inclinations," Heaney implicitly pits his own venturesome spiritual vision against Larkin's renegade, nine-to-five dauntedness. But it is a rigged contest.

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NOTES

[1] *The Redress of Poetry*. Heaney's and Larkin's works are abbreviated to initials in the parenthetical references in this essay.

[2] In "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," Heaney invites the reader:

> Come fly with me,
> come sniff the wind
> with the expertise
> of the Vikings—
>
> neighbourly, scoretaking
> killers, haggers
> and hagglers, gombeen-men,
> hoarders of grudges and gain.
>
> With a butcher's aplomb
> they spread out your lungs
> and made you warm wings
> for your shoulders. (*N* 14–15)

The Universal Dictionary of the English Language gives the following definition: "Gombeen-man: Money-lender, usurer; often used in Ireland of a man who keeps a shop or public-house and lends money at extortionate interest."

[3] This kind of cleverness irritated the real Larkin intensely: "I . . . have no belief in casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets, which last I find unpleasantly like the talk of literary understrappers letting you see they know the right people" (*RW* 79).

[4] These idioms are rather self-consciously constructed, however. James Simmons finds the phrases "embarrassing. It is not the way such a person talks" (40).

[5] The pun on "finds" "planted" by unscrupulous archaeologists is presumably unintended.

[6]

> I step through origins like a dog turning
> Its memories of wilderness on the kitchen mat:
> The bog floor shakes, water cheeps and lisps
> As I walk down rushes and heather. I love this turf-face . . .

[7] The rhymes of the two poems show the same contrast. The ababa scheme in "Home Is So Sad" dramatizes the developing theme, being tidy and neat in the first stanza ("left . . . go . . . bereft . . . so . . . theft"); skidding into discordant half-rhyme in the second, as time subverts the home ("as . . . be . . . was . . . cutlery . . . vase"). The rhyme scheme in Heaney's poem imitates the physical qualities of its subject, remaining throughout homely and flawed. The first stanza pararhymes aabb, "plate . . . temperate" being a distinctive *deibidhe* weak rhyme borrowed from Irish verse (see O'Donoghue 31–2). The remaining stanzas pararhyme abab, sometimes very approximately.

[8] Heaney himself uses this image in his 1981 interview with John Haffenden to distinguish his earlier style from his later: "I had a notion of poetry being

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like stained glass almost, although now I would like to be able to write poetry that was like window glass" (74).

[9] Heaney's cousin's subsequent return in "Station Island VIII" is usually read as the poet's rebuke to himself for his soft liberal attitude toward politics ("You confused evasion and artistic tact"). It can also be read as a reproof for his lapse into daunted elegiac grief:

> You whitewashed ugliness, drew
> the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*
> and saccharined my death with morning dew. (*SI* 83)

[10] In Heaney's view, both Thomas Hardy and Samuel Beckett are more positive than Larkin. Heaney praises Hardy for being "overwhelmed by miracle" in "The Darkling Thrush," continuing:

> But this, for sure, is not the Hardy to whom Larkin was converted after the strong enchantments of Yeats had failed for him. At that crucial point in his artistic development, Larkin turned to Hardy, the poet of human sadness, rather than to Hardy, the witness of irrational hope. (*RP* 152)

Many readers will find it difficult to distinguish these two Hardys from each other, or to detect how Hardy's "irrational hope" exceeds Larkin's in, say, "An Arundel Tomb," whose closing lines enact exactly the same gesture of negatived transcendence as those of "The Darkling Thrush."

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Edith Wharton and the Faubourg Saint-Germain: the Diary of the Abbé Mugnier

Anne Foata

R. W. B. Lewis, in his 1975 ground-breaking biography of Edith Wharton,[1] mentions the Abbé Mugnier, a curate at the Saint Thomas d'Aquin and Sainte Clotilde parishes in Paris, who was to become a lifelong friend of the novelist. Both churches are located in the heart of the Seventh Arrondissement on the Left Bank of the French capital, which includes the Faubourg Saint-Germain section, the Parisian environment of the great *hôtels particuliers* (town mansions) of the French aristocracy. The "Faubourg" (as it is more familiarly known) is the setting of Henry James's *The American*, where its haughty aloofness is epitomized by the old marquise de Bellegarde, and of parts of Wharton's own *The Custom of the Country* during the heroine's brief marriage to Count Raymond de Chelles.

The stronghold of the Legitimists (that is, the nobility of the ancien régime), the Faubourg in due time had opened up to the newer nobility of the Napoleon and Louis-Philippe regimes. It had also become home to the wealthy industrialists of the middle and late nineteenth century and, after the Franco-Prussian War, to some of the more prominent writers and artists.[2] Edith Wharton herself lived in its midst from 1906 to 1920, for short periods until 1911, and then on a more permanent basis after the sale of The Mount, her Lenox residence in western Massachusetts.

Wharton was introduced to the life of its salons by the French writer and Academician Paul Bourget and his American wife Minnie, the "Minnie-Pauls" as they appear in her letters and diaries until 1935, the year of Bourget's death. Wharton's social life in the Faubourg, which Lewis records with an eager relish for its aristocratic details, is quite staggering. Of keener

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interest, however, for Wharton scholars, is the number of her translators who were recruited amidst the Faubourg's literati and nobility.

On Bourget's suggestion, Charles du Bos, a friend of André Gide, translated *The House of Mirth* and, later, *Ethan Frome*. Gide himself, who had professed the greatest admiration for the latter work, was approached by Wharton for *Summer* but eventually declined, and du Bos did the translation (Lewis 398; see note 1). The Vicomte Robert d'Humières, a friend of Marcel Proust, began work on *The Custom of the Country*, but he was killed at the front before he finished it (Lewis 382). The eminent literary critic and art historian Louis Gillet on his own initiative offered to translate *A Mother's Recompense* and, later, *The Children*, while one of his daughters, Louisette, busied herself with one of Wharton's longer stories or novellas (Lewis 485). The Comtesse Jane d'Oillamson, whom Wharton had first met when she was still married to the Prince de Polignac, translated "The Reckoning," "The Confessional," "Souls Belated," and other stories (Lewis 207, 212). Charles du Bos, it is true, had an English mother and was bilingual, and so undoubtedly was Jane d'Oillamson whose mother was American.

All these names, with the exception of Jane d'Oillamson and the addition of numerous others, many of which were to some degree or other known or familiar to Wharton, appear in the diary of the Abbé Mugnier, which was published in parts in 1985 under the title *Le Journal de l'Abbé Mugnier (1879–1939)*.[3] The Abbé, as he was known to the end of his life despite the fact that he had been made a canon in 1925, knew about everybody.

He had been drawn into the milieu of the writers and artists in 1891 through his spiritual ministrations to the "decadent" author of *À Rebours*, J. K. Huysmans, whom he eventually converted to Roman Catholicism. As to the aristocrats, he started hearing the confessions of their footmen and parlor maids, went on with teaching the catechism to their sons and daughters, advised and comforted the wives, and ended up in their dining and drawing rooms.

Not that he was quite without misgivings about his intense dining out. "No priest has ever dined more about town than I," he confided to his diary on 29 January 1911; "I'm squandering my soul by platefuls." Another time he ruefully admitted to himself that he was rather the "marriage at Cana" type of priest than the "fast in the desert" type (10 April 1912). He was an avid reader of the classics, a lifelong enthusiast of Chateaubriand, and a great admirer of the music of Wagner. An untiring confidant of the *gens du monde* and *gens de lettres*, he did not, however, belong to the breed of the fashionable little society priests or court lackeys of eighteenth-century boudoir fiction. With his rather shabby soutane and heavy brogues, his some-

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what rustic appearance alone would have denied the fact, had not his mores been as unimpeachable as was his manner toward the intellectuals and aristos of his flock. His unpretentiousness was genuine; so were his curiosity for all things human and his benevolence. All his friends, high and low, knew they could tap his considerable knowledge of, and compassion for, the human heart.

The Abbé's diary with its almost daily entries over 60 years spans what has been called la Belle Epoque—that is, the late nineteenth century that came to an abrupt halt in 1914, and the troubled years of the *entre-deux-guerres*, the period between the two world wars. The *Mercure de France* edition presents a mere selection of this vast material, which the Abbé left to the first of his two "adopted nieces," the *nièce première* as he called her, the Comtesse François de Castries. The *nièce seconde* or second niece by elective adoption, the Princesse Marthe Bibesco, published her own correspondence with the Abbé between 1951 and 1957,[4] and a memoir *Le Confesseur et les Poètes*[5] in 1970. A distant cousin of the poetess Anna de Noailles, a writer in her own right and noted socialite, the princess who was acquainted with Walter Berry may well have met Edith Wharton. Wharton's scholars might want to have a look at both works for possible references to their novelist.

The Abbé Mugnier died at 91 years of age, a mere four months before the liberation of Paris in 1944. He had endured the hardships of no less than three major wars with one revolutionary upheaval as well (the Commune de Paris of 1871).

In his biography of Edith Wharton, Lewis first mentions a joint attendance by both the Abbé and the novelist at a social event on 13 April 1908. It is recorded as a random example of Wharton's social calendar for that day (Lewis 212). The Abbé Mugnier may have likewise made a note of the dinner at the Comtesse Rosa de Fitz-James's, but if so, the entry for that day or the next does not figure in the printed edition. Nor does Wharton's name, by the way, in the entries of those early years of her sojourns in Paris. She appears for the first time in it in the entry for 21 April 1915, together with her beloved friend Walter Berry, and both of them are mentioned again in the entry for 13 August of the same year. There are three entries for 1918 (7 and 9 February and 22 March), where they figure together with that other dear friend of Wharton's, Bernard Berenson. All three are mentioned again in the entries for October 1923 (Wharton and Berenson on the 11th, Wharton and Berry on the 16th). There is one last entry on 24 July 1924, with all three of them, before Wharton's name and Berenson's disappear definitively. Walter Berry, who had been mentioned on his own on five occasions (25 June 1917, 17 April and 27 November 1918, 19 February and 17 October 1921) appears one last time on 11 June 1927, a few months before

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his death. We see him rescuing a bewildered Abbé from the private showing of Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* and driving him home to his rooms at the convent of the Sisters of Saint Joseph de Cluny on the rue Méchain.

A total of eight entries refer to Edith Wharton, eleven to Walter Berry and eight to Bernard Berenson, several of them, as we have seen, common to all two or three of them. These I will venture to translate from the French, for the benefit of those Wharton scholars who may be interested in catching an echo of Wharton's "whirligig life," as James is reported to have called the latter's flurry of activity (Lewis 318). Numerous entries of the Abbé's *Journal* refer at some length to Charles du Bos and Paul Bourget who were close friends of Wharton, in addition to writers such as André Gide, Jean Cocteau, Anna de Noailles, Paul Valéry, and others who, without being intimate, were frequent visitors at Wharton's various residences or were coguests at the houses of her friends. A generous listing of the members of the French aristocracy and of their salons that Wharton frequented can also be culled from it.

A notable silence on the Abbé's part, however, and a missed opportunity on Wharton's come to light in the pages of the diary, at least in its printed version. They concern Henry James with respect to the Abbé and Marcel Proust with respect to Wharton.

Of course, on the Abbé's part it may well be that the entries recording an acquaintance with James were omitted in the printed edition of the *Journal*. We know how profusely James was wined, dined, and teaed by all Wharton's friends on his visits to Paris (e.g., Lewis 216). But then no entry of the diary mentions Wharton herself before 21 April 1915 and by that date the ailing James no longer came to Paris. Still, James's absence from the *Journal*, except for the mere mention of his authorship of the biography of the American sculptor W. W. Story and a passing remark on his style, is a disappointment. The Abbé's candid impressions of the rotund, magisterial, elderly James would have been gratifying.

There is no accountable reason for the missed opportunity *du côté de chez* Proust and Wharton. The former not only was a friend of the Abbé Mugnier but also a close acquaintance of Walter Berry, to whom he dedicated his *Pastiches et Mélanges* (Lewis 402). Wharton, moreover, might have met him in the salons of countless other mutual friends and acquaintances, Jean Cocteau's for instance, the Charles du Bos's, Anna de Noailles's, to name only a few. That they shared the same world of princesses and duchesses need not be expatiated on, but that they might eventually have translated portions of each other's work and failed to do so opens up an abyss of rueful frustration.

Lewis mentions a letter from Gide to Wharton in March 1916, in which

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Gide suggests that Proust take over the translation of *The Custom of the Country* left unfinished by Robert d'Humières's death, and actually gives her to understand that Proust is waiting for a word from her on that account (Lewis 400–01, 557). More than a decade later, in 1930, Wharton was approached by Proust's American publisher with the proposal that she assume the unfinished portion of Scott Moncrieff's *Remembrance of Things Past* and translate *Le Temps Retrouvé*. Had she been "forty or fifty years younger," as she confided in a letter to Berenson, she would have been gratified with the honor; at 68, however, she no longer felt herself quite able to muster the necessary energy (Lewis 494). *C'est dommage!*, as she might have said in the fluent French she used with many of her friends.

Here then are the references to Edith Wharton and her two close friends, Walter Berry and Bernard Berenson, as they appear in *Le Journal de l'Abbé Mugnier*. The ellipses in the text of the entries are my own, not the Abbé's. They concern passages I deemed irrelevant.

References to Edith Wharton

21 April 1915

> Had lunch at Mrs. Wharton's[6] with the Abbé Brémond[7] and Berry. Mrs. Wharton was talking of the life of Story by Henry James. James's work is like Péguy's, she said, only much more complicated. Story's life is quite extraordinary. He was an American sculptor, mediocre, who had established himself in Rome; a friend of the Brownings with whom he lived for a while. Has left no documents,[8] and yet James has written a remarkable story, a masterpiece.

13 August 1915

> Dined last night at Walter Berry's with Mrs. Wharton, Mr. & Mrs. Garrett, Rodier,[9] Mrs. Astor, another American,[10] and Bakst. On the table the severed heads of red roses swimming in a bowl of water, another array of charming heads! Berry's apartment[11] is the apartment of an amateur, a dilettante, with opened books scattered about, in every place and position, even on the floor. His guests gone, he talked to me of Bakst, a Russian with a lisp, whom I had once met at Mme. de Pourtalès's.[12] Bakst, a great decorator, illustrator, who made the costumes and designed the sets of the Ballets Russes. I was shown his colored sketches, some of them at least (for *The Blue God, Narcissus, The Afternoon of a Faun, Sheherazade,* etc.); Nijinsky had danced in them. When the history of the prewar years gets written, these documents will certainly be mentioned, for they

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reveal some queer, pathological states of mind of those who herald revolutions.

7 February 1918

Lunch at Lucas's with Mrs. Wharton, the Princess Lucien Murat, the Baronne de Brimont, Berenson, Saint-André,[13] Mac Lugan,[14] André Gide. André Gide sat next to me. A clean-shaven face, a balding head with the hair rather toward the back. Looks like a professor priest, a Protestant (which he is) with the stamp of austerity still upon him. Has been doing relief work since the outbreak of the war,[15] is now in Normandy. He is married and does not look sorry for it. . . . On leaving the restaurant the Baronne de Brimont dragged me off to a small gallery on the rue Faubourg-Saint-Honoré to a Picasso, Matisse, and Art Nègre exhibit. . . . Berenson did not appear to set great store by the new painters.

9 February 1918

Dined at Mrs. Wharton's with Berenson, the architect Naville, Saint-André, and Charpentier.[16] Berenson remarked that André Gide's face showed a strong resemblance to George Eliot's. Naville, who was a schoolmate of Gide at the Ecole Alsacienne, said that they had nicknamed him *le crispatif* there (neither *crispé* nor *crispant*, the invented *crispatif* may have meant that Gide's tense face aggravated his classmates) because he talked with clenched teeth. Mrs. Wharton finds the author of *The Immoralist* shy. As I mentioned the austere cast of Gide's face, Berenson added "a woman's austerity, not a man's."

22 March 1918

Had lunch yesterday at Lucas's with Mrs. Wharton, André Gide, Berenson. Gide told me of his strict puritanical upbringing and of his individualistic reaction afterwards. After a while, however, he recognized that it is the Gospel that redeems the individual. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it." The exaltation of art, he said, is the abnegation of art. . . . Gide mentioned Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (*King Ubu*)[17]—a ferocious Rabelaisian eccentricity.

11 October 1923

Just back from the hotel Beau Site on the rue de Presbourg where I was Berenson's guest for lunch. Mrs. Wharton talked to us about (the abbey of) Pontigny[18] where she spent a few hours. Silence is the rule there. Gide who had been informed that Paul Valéry was to be invited at the abbey objected to it on the grounds that Valéry was

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sure to talk too much. So, as I said, one does not talk there. Speaking of which, Berenson remarked: "I dislike collective cerebration."

16 October 1923

Had lunch today at Walter Berry's with the Princess Lucien Murat, the Prince Bassiano,[19] Jean Cocteau, Marie Laurencin,[20] Mrs. Wharton. . . . Cocteau spoke quite highly of Paul Bourget. He has read him, admired *La Geôle* (*The Jail*). Bourget, he said, was made for the news item. . . . He told Walter Berry and me that the future of literature lay in clarity, clarity enriched by all the past complexities. It will be a new classicism, without any rococo.

24 July 1924

Mr. and Mrs. Henraux drove me down to Versailles yesterday where I had lunch at the Prince and Princess Bassiano's with Mrs. Wharton and Walter Berry. . . . Berenson has always felt the burden of his Jewish origin, Lucien Henraux told me. He also said that once on hearing his name spoken Mme. Mühlfeld had crossed herself; she can't stand the sight of him. Good grief!

References to Walter Berry

21 April 1915 (see Wharton)
13 August 1915 (see Wharton)
25 June 1917

Lunch at Mme. Cocteau's, with the Princess Lucien Murat, the Comtesse de Chevigné, Jean Cocteau, and Walter Berry. Mme. de Chevigné is the great-granddaughter of Laure de Noves, the great-niece of the Marquis de Sade.[21] She said that the marquis worshipped his wife; all his letters to her are love letters.

28 February 1918

Dined at the hotel Ritz last night as a guest of the Princess Soutzo.[22] With Marcel Proust we talked about hawthorns. . . . Berry told me that Berenson is quite unhappy at not being more successful with women. And speaking of women, he also said that the Ritz had become a brothel at the onset of the war. Berry added that he could not understand why the act of copulation was considered a crime. It is as natural as ingesting food, he said. I quite like Proust.

17 April 1918

Had lunch at Walter Berry's with the Countess Joachim Murat and

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Jean Cocteau. . . . Jean Cocteau was discoursing about the times in which we are living.

27 November 1918

Dinner last night at Walter Berry's with Jean Cocteau and the Duc de Guiche. Berry had been expecting several charming ladies who did not turn up. Jean Cocteau had quite a few stories to tell about art dealers; he mentioned names. . . . Cocteau also spoke at some length of Jacques-Emile Blanche,[23] quite uncritically. Blanche has sent the proofs of his coming book on some painters to Berry for his archives. There is a preface by Marcel Proust.

19 February 1921

Dined at the Princess Marthe Bibesco's with Walter Berry. . . . We talked about Abel Bonnard.[24] Lack of success makes him hard on others, Berry said; he's lazy.

17 October 1921

Dined last night at Walter Berry's. Jean Cocteau joined us during the meal. I spoke to him of his book on (or against) Barrès.[25] He has considered Barrès as one would "a pelota court wall": with espaliers of fruit and flowers on the reverse side. He calls Anna de Noailles "*Sainte Opportune.*"

16 October 1923 (see Wharton)
24 July 1924 (see Wharton)
11 June 1927

Hurried to the Beaumonts',[26] who had assembled a very brilliant assembly to view a lengthy German film, *Metropolis.* Bizarre, crazy, etc. Factories, offices. . . . A tower of Babel with strange men, women, machines. Clusters of people, angry crowds, ascendings, catastrophes, a flood, dances, a cathedral, and underground passages; from time to time men's lips coming near women's lips. To be short, a series of nightmares. "Quite teutonic," was the general verdict. Technically, of course, it has required some tremendous labor. Without forgetting the music, often quite bewildering—snatches of Wagner's *Tetralogy* to accompany ultramodern, ultrafuturist sequences. Left around 1 a.m. Walter Berry took pity on me and kindly drove me home.

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References to Bernard Berenson

21 November 1917

> Berenson was telling me of Walter Pater's enormous influence on himself and his generation. Pater, a man of great propriety, touring Italy with two deadly boring sisters. With a face like that of "a man of the earth." A humanist, a Hellenist. Oscar Wilde was influenced by him, though he never became a disciple. Wilde is "less refined." *Marius the Epicurian* is about the death throes of paganism and the birth of Christianity. Pater was a "fellow" at a college. He was in his 60s when he died. His influence was greater in the United States than in England. He wrote some exquisite pages on Watteau,[27] Winckelmann[28] and others. There is also something on Plato. He gives you the straightforward impression, the aesthetic one. Berenson knew Oscar Wilde well. He was an Irishman with something of the trickster about him, of the exhibitionist. He was a snob. At the Café Royal in London where they had lunch together, he was saying to Berenson: "I am presently to show myself at the Countess's; it's tiresome, but it's necessary." Wilde is a mediocre author. He was on the verge of becoming a decent playwright when he died. Berenson came across portraits of him in books on homosexuality published in Berlin. In Germany there are many "Spartan homosexuals."

5 January 1918

> Lunch at Mr. Berenson's today with Miss Barney[29] and a Pole, Mr. Milosz,[30] who has the shaven face of an actor, of a Dominican monk. I'm using the epithet on purpose, for Berenson told me afterwards that he intends to become a Dominican. He has the typical Dominican physiognomy. . . . Berenson believes that Goethe underwent some kind of ossification on his return from Italy and that he became pompous (*pompier*) in a way, which he wasn't before he went. The ladies around him fell into bigotry and so, at 80, we see him in a tavern raising his glass to paganism. . . . Berenson thinks that the Reims cathedral is much more beautiful with the wounds inflicted to it by the war. . . . And I left these charming guests to ride the subway home to my lodgings.

7 February 1918 (see Wharton)
9 February 1918 (see Wharton)
28 February 1918 (see Berry)
22 March 1918 (see Wharton)
11 October 1923 (see Wharton)
24 July 1924 (see Wharton)

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NOTES

[1] R. W. B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton. A Biography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); all references to it will appear parenthetically in the text of this article.

[2] The Faubourg is also the site of many government offices and of the French *Assemblée Nationale.* The prime minister's *Hôtel Matignon* is located at No. 57 and 58, rue de Varenne. No. 58 was Wharton's own address in 1907 and 1908.

[3] Paris: Le Mercure de France.

[4] *La Vie d'une Amitié,* 3 vol. (Paris: Plon, 1951–57).

[5] Paris: Grasset, 1970.

[6] At 53, rue de Varenne, which she had leased in spring 1909 and where she was to live until she moved to *Pavillon Colombe* at Saint Brice-sous-Forêt north of Paris in 1920.

[7] Abbé Henri Brémond (1865–1935), an ex-Jesuit, author of a voluminous (yet unfinished) *Literary History of the Religious Feeling in France from the Wars of Religion to the Present Day.* Elected to the French Academy in 1923.

[8] A strange statement, considering the full title of James's book, *William Wetmore Story and His Friends: From Letters, Diaries and Recollections,* which appeared in two volumes in 1903. Story (1819–95), a native Bostonian and a lawyer by profession before settling in Rome in 1856, was famous for his statue of Cleopatra, which was exhibited at the London exposition of 1862. James found his statues "not altogether unsuggestive of Mrs. Jarley's waxworks" and Mrs. Henry Adams, on visiting his studio, regretted that "he spoiled so many . . . nice blocks of white marble" (qtd. in Leon Edel, *Henry James: A Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985, 140–41).

[9] The Abbé mentions him one more time in his *Journal* in the entry for 28 May 1924 when he records the presence at a dinner he was attending of the writer Colette "clad in a printed fabric by Rodier with some red in it, her arms bare and strong." Might Rodier have been a fabric designer or a couturier, in some way related to the current knitwear label Rodier?

[10] Nancy Astor, later Lady Astor (1879–1964), the second wife of William Waldorf Astor, whose father had become a British citizen in 1890 and was to be made the first Viscount Astor in 1917. In 1919, she was to become the first woman member of the British Parliament. She was the brilliant mistress of Cliveden, her country house in England, where Wharton was a frequent visitor.

[11] Walter Berry's residence at the time was 14, rue Saint-Guillaume, a street perpendicular to the Boulevard Saint-Germain. He was to take up the lease of Wharton's apartment at 53, rue de Varenne, when she moved to St. Brice in 1920.

[12] Perhaps the Comtesse Mélanie de Pourtalès, whose salon was located on the rue Tronchet, outside the Faubourg. She was the wife of a Lutheran banker of Swiss origin and had been a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Eugénie, the wife of Napoleon III. Wharton had met her in the early 1880s at Cannes on the French Riviera when she was a young girl, and then later in Paris during her bouts of socializing in the winter of 1908 (Lewis 195). Mme. de Pourtalès had died the previous year. It may also be the Comtesse Jacqueline who frequently entertained the Abbé or the Comtesse Hélène.

[13] R. W. B. Lewis mentions Alfred de Saint-André as a frequent guest or co-guest of Wharton's, who became a "regular" like the Bourgets, the du Boses,

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or the Comtesse de Fitz-James. He describes him as "a man of no visible achievements" but "a great gourmet and a connoisseur of out-of-the-way restaurants" (Lewis 196–97).

[14] Mac Lugan must be Eric Maclagan, another "regular" of Wharton's set. The head of the British Ministry of Information bureau in Paris, he was attached to the British Peace Delegation in 1919, and later became the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Lewis 408, 476). He was another fine gourmet and discoverer of little restaurants, and also "a skilled raconteur of bawdy stories" (says Lewis), two qualities one would not basically expect from the son of an archbishop (his father, William Maclagan, had been the Archbishop of York).

[15] Gide and Wharton had met in connection with the American Hostels for Refugees that Wharton had established at the very onset of the war. Gide became a member of the Franco-American General Committee of which Wharton was the chairperson. They eventually became friends, and the two of them had spent several days in the company of each other in and around Hyères (on the Mediterranean in Provence) in the late fall of 1915 (Lewis 372). They saw each other regularly during the 1920s.

[16] One would think of the composer of the opera *Louise* (1900), Gustave Charpentier (1860–1957), but he may also be the publisher referred to in a later entry of the *Journal* (for 19 February 1925), to whom the novelist Alphonse Daudet would send letters of recommendation for young aspiring writers, adding a secret code for his correspondent not to act on them.

[17] Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) wrote a number of novels and comedies in his short paroxystic life, quite a few around the central farcical character of the tyrant Ubu (an avatar of one of his secondary school teachers). The opening of *Ubu Roi* on 10 December 1896 had been a stormy affair.

[18] An old Cistercian abbey on the northern confines of Burgundy founded in 1114. The remaining buildings served as a kind of retreat for writers and intellectuals after the war under the aegis of Paul Desjardins (1859–1940). Lewis mentions one such visit of Wharton's during a motor trip to Nohant (George Sand's château in the central region of Berry) with Walter Berry in the early 20s. She found herself at lunch in the company of Gide, du Bos, André Maurois, and Lytton Strachey talking about the art of translation (Lewis 455–56).

[19] The Prince and Princess Bassiano had a literary salon at Versailles, where Wharton was a frequent guest after she moved to St. Brice. Lewis writes (439) that she reencountered André Gide there and that it was at the Bassianos' that she first met Paul Valéry, who then came periodically to visit her, both at St. Brice and at her Château Sainte-Claire in Hyères on the Mediterranean.

[20] The painter (1885–1956) who (almost) never painted the noses of her models. She frequented the painters of the *Bateau Lavoir* in Paris (cf. her picture "Apollinaire and his friends") and was the poet Apollinaire's companion for a while.

[21] The Comtesse de Chevigné is assumed to be the model for Proust's Duchesse de Guermantes, but so is also the Comtesse Greffulhe.

[22] The Princess Hélène Soutzo, née Chrissoveloni, was to marry the writer Paul Morand in 1927.

[23] Jacques-Emile Blanche (1861–1942) was not only the fashionable portrait painter we know from his portraits of Henry James, Proust, Cocteau, Gide, and

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others, he was also an art critic and a memorialist of his time (*Propos dans l'Atelier, Cahiers d'un Artiste*). Wharton was a frequent guest at his villa in Passy (Paris) and his manor house at Offranville in Normandy.

[24] A writer and journalist (1883–1968) who turned to politics and became minister of education during the Vichy regime. He was sentenced to death after the war but had the sentence reduced to 10 years of banishment. He is not to be confused with the painter Pierre Bonnard.

[25] Maurice Barrès (1862–1923), a writer and politician, a staunch supporter of nationalistic views and of the war against Germany. The Abbé Mugnier's *Journal* mentions him as many as 81 times from 1891 on. He had a short affair with Anna de Noailles, and there was a nasty scandal over the suicide of his nephew Charles Demange in 1909.

[26] The Count and Countess Etienne de Beaumont, in their town house on the rue Duroc, and the Vicount and Vicountess Charles de Noailles in theirs at 3, Place des Etats-Unis (which was once Wharton's brother Harry's residence and on occasions her own), were the patrons of the artists during the "*Années Folles*" (the "Roaring Twenties") in France. They participated in many of the surrealists' pranks and sponsored many of Jean Cocteau's films and plays. The Abbé mentions the scandal around Cocteau's *The Blood of a Poet* at the Noailles's, the viewing of which was hastily canceled on the very night of its scheduled projection with the Abbé's attendance (on 17 November 1930, according to the Abbé's diary).

[27] The French painter (1684–1721) of the *Fêtes Galantes* (*The Embarkment for Cythera, Gilles*, etc.).

[28] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the German archaeologist and art historian (1707–68), the advocate of a return to the simplicity of Greek art, which opened the way to neoclassicism in literature and the arts.

[29] Natalie Barney was "the highly cultivated Ohio-born woman who presided over a cult of Lesbos and a high-powered literary salon in rue Jacob," to steal Lewis's own definition (407). It seems that Wharton made a point of staying clear of her, although Lewis mentions a lunch in Walter Berry's apartment "in the fall of 1926" where they were co-guests (Lewis 444). The Abbé Mugnier appears not to have shared Wharton's reluctance, and Berenson was one of her gentlemen friends.

[30] Oscar Vladislav de Lubics Milosz (1877–1939) was of Lithuanian origin like Berenson and lived in Paris where he wrote poetry, plays, and novels.

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The Thematization of Time in E. M. Forster's "The Eternal Moment" and Joyce's "The Dead"

Silvana Caporaletti

> Time of itself is nothing, but from thought receives its rise . . .
> —Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* 1.459–60
>
> Only through time time is conquered.
> —T. S. Eliot, *The Four Quartets,* "Burnt Norton" line 90

At the beginning of our century a rather apocalyptic vision seemed to pervade Western culture, mainly as a result of the spread of evolutionary theory and, even more, of the enunciation of the second principle of thermodynamics in 1850.[1] Human life appeared to be subject to impersonal laws that are utterly indifferent to its presence, and individual existence appeared to be nothing more than a small fragment in a dizzy temporal extension that began in the nonhuman and would end in sheer nothingness. Such a vision, postulated as it was by science in an epoch that gave science unlimited credit, not only threatened to nullify all moral tensions and deprive of meaning the very values on which human society rests, but seemed to foster, and even to some extent legitimize, the predominance of a selfish and insensitive materialistic ethos.

It is hardly surprising, then, that in the general ethical bewilderment resulting from the disappearance of divine authority and from the scientific forecast of ultimate universal annihilation, a number of authors undertook as a moral obligation to counterbalance this dangerous tendency by affirming, in their work, the unquenchable human need for ethical values that would encourage the individual to transcend selfishness and strictly personal interest. As it was no longer possible to justify values such as gener-

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osity, altruism, self-abnegation, truth, justice, charity, and love in metaphysical and religious terms, these authors sought a solution to the problem of how to provide these values with an undogmatic and convincing foundation. They had to be affirmed in human terms, and in order to do so, it was necessary to redeem human existence, at least in part, from the contingency to which the linear conception of time as an endless, destructive flux seemed to reduce it.[2] This may be the main reason for the great interest with which the theories of Henri Bergson were received in that epoch.

In *Time and Free Will* (first published in French in 1888), Bergson draws a distinction between two different kinds of time: the measurable, mathematical time where external events take place one after another in regular sequence, and what he calls "durée réelle," the interior, subjective domain in which psychological life enfolds, following individual, unpredictable rhythms. He calls the first kind of time "espace" because, according to him, it is not a real dimension but a conceptual artifact, generated by the arbitrary extension to time of properties that apply only to space.[3] Real time, "durée" (duration), is to him a spherical dimension where past, present, and future coexist and continually interact, shaping each other. Whereas "espace" is measurable and homogeneous, quantitative in character, duration is irregular and essentially qualitative.[4] It is like a melody in which all the notes are simultaneously present, and any change that might occur at any point of it would alter the quality of the whole.[5] Contrary to objective time, whose movement, governed as it is by physical and mathematical laws, is unidirectional and irreversible, this circular dimension, ruled by imagination and memory, allows free movement in all directions of time. In *Matter and Memory* (first published in French in 1896) Bergson makes another important distinction, between normal memory, a faculty purely instrumental to the act of remembrance, and "mémoire réelle," a form of unconscious memory where past events are preserved in their original intensity. From this spiritual reservoir such events can suddenly emerge into the present and fuse with it, acquiring new and deeper significance. Bergson's theories, then, seemed to offer the possibility of a solution. As "durée," time ceases to be an irredeemable destructive force and becomes a preserving element, a form of continuity out of which, through "mémoire réelle," the past can be called to a new life. It is possible therefore to achieve in "durée" a form of permanence that can redeem individual existence from ephemerality.

What most characterizes European literature at the beginning of our century is precisely a deep reflection on time. Proust's *Recherche* is deeply informed by Bergson's philosophical theories, and his concept of "mémoire involontaire" seems modeled on Bergson's "mémoire réelle." Like Proust, Pirandello, Dorothy Richardson, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Svevo, Joyce,

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and E. M. Forster pay particular attention to psychological time and tend to analyze and explore it, implicitly contrasting the possibilities of this subjective medium with the restrictions of objective time.[6] In most of their works, objective time is diminished in importance and becomes what Bakhtin calls "collateral, nonfundamental time," a mere background to external events. The events that matter, those that transform and transfigure and are the real becoming, take place in the idiosyncratic temporality of individual consciousness, where the rigid partitions of physical time are continually disintegrated.[7]

In *Aspects of the Novel,* E. M. Forster theorizes the double temporality that governs human existence, distinguishing between "life in time," which develops in a linear direction and is ruled by the eroding entity that we call objective time, and "life by values," which follows the irregular rhythm of an enriching time and is scanned by the spiritual and emotional intensity with which some particular moments are lived:

> There seems [to be] something else in life besides time, something which may conveniently be called 'value,' something which is measured not by minutes or hours, but by intensity, so that when we look at our past it does not stretch back evenly, but piles up into a few notable pinnacles . . . So daily life . . . is practically composed of two lives—the life in time and the life by values. (42)

Measured by intensity and irregularly scattered with "pinnacles," "life by values" is a psychological dimension clearly similar to Bergson's "durée," and the word "value" that defines it seems to imply an ethical sense in Forster's distinction.

Two almost contemporary short stories written at the beginning of our century, "The Eternal Moment" by E. M. Forster (originally published in 1905) and "The Dead" by Joyce (originally published in 1907), are paradigmatic of the new sensibility about time, as the contrast between "life in time" and "life by values" appears particularly significant in both texts. Almost all the characters in them reflect this essential temporal dichotomy, and their positive or negative moral connotation is strictly connected with the temporal modality prevailing in their existence. They are not distinguished as good or bad according to their behavior, but as "living" or "dead in life"—as those who live in duration and remain spiritually alive, capable, in spite of the passing of time, of intense and genuine emotions, or those who are shriveled inside by a repetitive and materialistic existence, spent in the isolation of their own selfishness.

Creatures of a present completely separated from the past, these latter characters display an alienated personality, an impoverished sensibility. De-

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veloping in "espace," their lives are ruled by the monotonous urgency of today, and their conduct, controlled and rational to excess, reveals coldness, calculation, selfishness. They are what Bakhtin calls "actors of life" (passim) because their identity coincides with their social mask. Such characters are not infrequent in early twentieth-century literature and are emblematically represented by T. S. Eliot's emotionally sterile Hollow Men and even more by Conrad's Pilgrims in *Heart of Darkness:* barren, dull, hardly human creatures whose existence, spent in a state of spiritual inertness and physical inactivity, appears even more negative than that of Kurtz, who lives his destructive energy with determination and moral awareness. The positive characters, in contrast, have values of a spiritual nature. Their present, enriched by memories and oriented by the past, is a form of "durée," so they live with greater fullness and insight. The moments that they once lived with high emotional intensity can suddenly come back to their present, coagulating into instants so saturated with time that a mysterious temporal leap can take place in them and annihilate the barriers of physical time. These moments of temporal transcendence are of an epiphanic nature: like Proust's fragments of "pure time," Pound's "vortexes," Eliot's "images," Virginia Woolf's "moments of being," and Huxley's "moments of vision," Forster's "eternal moments" and Joyce's "epiphanies" allow a glance into the atemporal world of values.

The very limited, almost stifling space in which the plots of the two short stories are developed seems intentionally conceived to throw into relief the temporal extension of the narratives. Time is an extraordinarily strong, pervasive presence in both texts, but more than being the organizing principle of the plots, a mere structural element, it assumes a subtler narrative function. It is thematized; and in its accentuated dichotomy of "espace" as opposed to "durée," it becomes a metaphorical ingredient, a vehicle of significance. Objective time, a fleeting present whose repetitive and pressing rhythm regulates everyday life, is associated with separation and absence, death and spiritual paralysis. Subjective time, which impregnates private life with its irregular, secret drives and in whose circularity present, past, and future simultaneously coexist, is in contrast associated with spiritual vitality and values of human communion and understanding.

Though very different in style and artistic conception, "The Eternal Moment" and "The Dead" are thematically similar. Both stem from the same ethical preoccupation: to denounce the dangerous emotional bluntness that the continuous flowing of time inevitably induces in people, and to shake them out of their spiritual numbness. The contrast between "living" and "dead in life" is expressed in both stories through a surprisingly analogous temporal movement involving a sudden shift from objective time to "durée":

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The initially sharp distinction between past and present is transcended at the narrative climax in an epiphanic moment of temporal simultaneity and dissolves, at the end, in a unifying cosmic vision. In both stories memory occupies a central position, as the evocation of the past seems to be a vivifying, mysteriously thaumaturgic energy. The repository of memory is, in both cases, a woman whose spiritual vitality, still intact notwithstanding the passing of time, is vividly contrasted with the insensibility and materialism of the other characters. Miss Raby in "The Eternal Moment" and Gretta in "The Dead" both live in "durée" and are able to recapture an intense moment of their past, reliving it with the same emotion as before. Their power of recollection is a reviving spiritual force. In "The Eternal Moment," Miss Raby feels that the awakening of memory would be the only possible antidote to the spiritual desolation of Feo Ginori, the man who fell passionately in love with her 20 years before. In "The Dead," Gretta's painful recollection of her dead lover is the catalytic agent of Gabriel's regenerating epiphany, a moment of insight that allows him a mysteriously synchronic vision of his own past and present.

The time span covered by the two plots is very limited in the external chronology of the stories—three days in "The Eternal Moment" and only a few hours in "The Dead"—but it is expanded by flashbacks and flashforwards so as to include almost the entire existence of the protagonists. The narrative present describes a public event, apparently of little significance in its banality: in "The Eternal Moment," the return to Vorta of Miss Raby, a middle-aged writer who, by setting her famous novel in the little mountain village, has turned it into a fashionable holiday resort, and in "The Dead," the condescending participation of Gabriel Conroy and his wife Gretta in the ritual Christmas party of his old aunts. In both stories, the relevant event, that which produces a change both in the sensibility and the lives of the protagonists, is of a private nature, so subjective and intimate that its importance is hardly perceived by the other characters and can easily be overlooked by the less attentive reader. It resides, in fact, in a fleeting moment of vision that allows Miss Raby and Gabriel a deep insight into their true selves. Their epiphanic experience is generated by a sudden intersecting of present and past that, projecting them above time, allows them a perspective from which they can contemplate their whole existence at a glance and evaluate themselves. This essential moment of self-knowledge is what imparts a new orientation to their lives: Although both texts remain open-ended and unresolved, it is possible to discern with sufficient clarity that the lives of the two protagonists will take a new course.[8]

The essentially different nature of the revelations in the two short stories is a clear indication of the difference between the artistic conceptions

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that underlie them. In Forster, the moment of sharpened vision restores Miss Raby to a full awareness of her inner worthiness and redeems her from an obsessive sense of guilt. At the same time, though, it also discloses to her the spiritual shallowness of the people around her, so that, in withdrawing from it, the woman isolates herself from the others. In "The Dead," in contrast, when the passionate intensity of Gretta's recollection forces Gabriel to recognize his own emotional limitations and shallowness, he also perceives the essential humanity that unites him to the others. The overall movement of the narratives, then, appears inverted: from a present that initially seems to promise her union and solidarity, Forster's Miss Raby moves toward a future of separation and existential loneliness, whereas Joyce's Gabriel, who at the beginning appears isolated in a present of selfishness and hypocrisy, and is initially projected toward the East in a symbolic rejection of his personal and national past, turns in the end toward the West, yielding to the sense of universal communion that, beyond human limits, unites the living and the dead. "The Eternal Moment" thus expresses a more pessimistic vision than "The Dead." It emanates a sense of closure and ultimate incommunicability, rather unusual in Forster, who, with the "only connect" of his novels, seems rather to indicate a possible remedy for progressive materialism and spiritual withering. There is a sense of opening out to others, an intimation, even though only a slight one, of moral regeneration and hope in the last story of *Dubliners,* which renders it anomalous in the general paralysis that characterizes the entire collection.

The conflict between two moral worlds that, in his other works, Forster exemplifies in terms of spatial opposition (London and Monteriano, Sawston and Cambridge, England and Italy or India), is expressed in this story, as I said, in terms of temporal opposition, through the dialectic contrast that is established between the present Vorta and the Vorta of 20 years before. As the custodian of memory, Miss Raby is the temporal consciousness in the tale: She continually superimposes the village of her youth upon the present one, whose beauty, though apparently unchanged with the passing of years, is revealed by comparison as deeply corroded and corrupt. In the fictional world of Forster, the dichotomy between a present charged with negativity and a past rich in positive values is very pronounced: Once an idyllic little village, Vorta is now defaced by coarse neon lights and invaded by tourists whose intolerance has suffocated the natural joyfulness of people and enforced silence on the church bells. Material affluence has irremediably deteriorated, almost destroyed, all human values. Greed for money and personal interest, disloyalty and selfishness seem to preside over all human relations.

The living emblem of new Vorta is Feo Ginori, a mean, insensitive char-

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acter who has carved his way into life through slander and defamation. This hotel concierge, fat and affected, is what is left of the athletic mountain guide who, 20 years before, fell in love with the young Miss Raby and, disregarding all social conventions in the intensity of his passion, declared his love to her. Of that passionate young man no trace remains in the present. Feo is profoundly changed not only in body but in soul, and his spiritual death is symbolically expressed through his loss of memory. The episode on the mountain, the splendid moment that raised the highest "pinnacle" in the interior life of Miss Raby and remained for her a constant source of light and inspiration, has been totally effaced in Feo, who, living only in "espace," is now so seared inside as to have lost even the memory of ever having been able to love: "He had forgotten everything, forgotten her, forgotten what had happened, forgotten what he was like when he was young" (215). Miss Raby knows that the only possibility of redemption is to awaken in him an emotional memory of his past and so reconnect him to his own self of 20 years ago. She tries to do so by pointing out to him "that other fire, which she discerned, far back in the traveling distance, high up the mountains of youth," because she feels that then "he would become alive, that he at all events would escape the general doom which she had prepared for the place and for the people" (213–14). But Feo's distance from his past is by now unbridgeable: the man is spiritually dead and when in the end he is finally forced to remember, he can feel only dismay and fear because he dreads that the revelation of his old transgression may endanger his present respectability. Thus the last, burning question of Miss Raby, whether he had ever really been in love with her, remains unanswered:

> It was doubtful whether he could have answered, whether he had any opinion about that day at all. But he did not make the attempt. He saw again that he was menaced by an ugly, withered, elderly woman, who was trying to destroy his reputation and his domestic peace. (219–20)

Miss Raby, then, fails in her attempt; but when her hopes are shattered she does not respond, as she did in a preceding episode, with despair and foreboding of death. The recollection of the past kindles in her a moment of vision: With a sense of temporal dislocation she suddenly transcends the contingent moment, and for a few instants past and present become simultaneously present for her, equally alive and equally real.

> It evoked a complete vision of that same man as he had been twenty years before. She could see him to the smallest detail of his clothes or his hair, the flowers in his hand, the graze on his wrist . . . She could hear his voice, neither insolent nor diffident, never threaten-

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> ing, never apologizing, . . . as his passion grew, becoming incoherent, crying that she must believe him, that she must love him in return, that she must fly with him to Italy, where they would live for ever, always happy, always young. (216)

In their short parallel coexistence, past and present shed light on each other, disclosing to her a new perspective that allows her to evaluate positively herself and her life.

> She realized that . . . the incident upon the mountain had been one of the great moments of her life—perhaps the greatest, certainly the most enduring: that she had drawn unacknowledged power and inspiration from it, just as the trees draw vigor from a subterranean spring. . . . There was more reality in it than in all the years of success . . . which had followed it and which it had rendered possible . . . She had been in love with Feo, and she had never loved so greatly again. A presumptuous boy had taken her to the gates of heaven, and, though she would not enter with him, the eternal remembrance of the vision had made life seem endurable and good. (216–17)

Her life, then, develops in "durée," it is lived as a continuum, and this new awareness can restore her to a full sense of her own dignity:

> In that moment of final failure, there had been vouchsafed to her a vision of herself, and she saw that she had lived worthily. She was conscious of a triumph over experience and earthly facts, a triumph magnificent, cold, hardly human, whose existence no one but herself would ever surmise. (221)

The contrast between the two characters is the contrast between a man who has lived a "life in time" and a woman who has been able to live a "life by values": Losing contact with his own past and surrendering to the flow of linear time, Feo has been unable to preserve anything from corrosion, and as a result his reality is made up only of today's reality. Keeping memory alive, anchoring herself to a moment of sublime intensity, Miss Raby has established a continuity in time and enriched her present with her past. Whereas Feo is only what he is today, Miss Raby contains within her the entire history of her existence; and whereas Feo is the product of change and transformation, she is the fruit of permanence within change. Thus the temporal dynamics of the story metaphorically express two opposite, hardly reconcilable modes of living, between which Forster does not seem to see any possibility of communication. The end of the story is, as I said, pessimistic, negative even for Miss Raby, the only bearer of positive values. Her words to Feo, addressed as they are to a concierge, and in public, are a

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transgression of social rules. This loses her the affection of Leyland, the elderly traveling companion with whom she had hoped to spend her old age. Leyland feels that by exposing "her thoughts and desires to a man of another class" she had "hurt him too much . . . Not only she, but he himself and all their equals, were degraded by it" (221). So, at the end of the tale, the woman silently walks away from the others toward a future of exclusion and isolation. "At that moment, if kind voices had called her from the hotel, she would not have returned" (221). The spiritual distance that separates her from the others is symbolically reflected in the immense spatial and temporal distance that seems to separate her from the valley:

> From the view-terrace she looked down on the perishing and perishable beauty of the valley, and, though she loved it no less, it seemed to be infinitely distant, like a valley in a star. (221)

The glance that she casts into the profundity of space is also a glance into the depths of time, and her refusal to turn to an improbable call, her choice of silence, is an acknowledgment of the incommunicability of her vision.

As in "The Eternal Moment," the contrast between a sterile and repetitive present and a past full of emotional vitality is crucial in "The Dead." Here too the external time of the story, a stagnant present hardly varying from that of the preceding stories in *Dubliners,* is the segmented course of daily routines and conventions, whereas the past, the time of memory, is the vital dimension of affections and emotions, where personal wholeness and authentic human communion are achieved. Two opposite patterns of imagery emphasize this contrast. The present is mainly associated with artificial light, enclosed places, and in particular with speech. The persistence of the past is mainly intimated through darkness, cold, open spaces, and above all through music. Yet, in the course of the story, a progressive convergence of opposites clearly emerges and culminates in the final image of the snow, a comprehensive symbol which, transcending both time and space, encompasses all.

Narrative imagery clearly individuates Gabriel as an inhabitant of the present: He is mainly associated with artificial light, enclosed places, repetitive events, and more significantly with speech in an ambiance pregnant with music.[9] His old aunts, living relics of the past, and even more his wife Gretta, are set in sharp opposition to him: From the very beginning they are strongly associated with music, and Gretta in particular with darkness, open spaces, cold, and snow. The physical appearance of the two main characters is also an implicit indication of their different relation to the past. Whereas in the case of Gabriel emphasis is placed on his physical transformation—he has become rather fat and, like Feo, exhibits a corpulence

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shaped by time—of Gretta we are given to perceive the preservation of beauty in her figure and the intact intensity of her emotion when she recollects her love for Michael Fury.

Also in this story, memory is the spiritual force that can counteract the numbing of emotions, and Gretta's recollection acts as a catalyst in the process of Gabriel's regeneration. Yet the situation created by Joyce is much subtler and more complex than that conceived by Forster. If a basic analogy can be detected between the two relational triangles Miss Raby–Feo–Leyland in "The Eternal Moment" and Gretta–Michael Fury–Gabriel in "The Dead," still the situations and narrative perspectives are quite different. In "The Dead," events are mostly filtered through the consciousness of Gabriel, who is a stranger to Gretta's recollection. The voice of the past that all of a sudden reaches Gretta along the sad notes of an old Irish song can speak only to her. Gabriel cannot hear it, not because he refuses to do so, but because that memory does not belong to him. Yet, the emotional intensity evoked by Gretta and the cogent presentness of her old pain are strong enough to awake sincere and altruistic feelings in him. Thus, in "The Dead," the past does accomplish its reviving role, albeit in an indirect, triangulated way.

Contrary to Feo, Gabriel is still capable of redemption: He has not severed all links with the past, he can hear its call in three different moments in the story, and each time he responds to it with an emotion that he can hardly control. On the first two occasions, when he briefly recalls Lily's infancy and his own familial past, Gabriel recoils from memory with a sense of disturbance and bitterness, but on the third, when he evokes fond memories of his private past—moments of secret ecstasy that "burst like stars upon his memory" (214)—he lingers on them and tries to recapture his feeling of love for Gretta as he had felt it in his youth. But he cannot do so; his impoverished sensibility allows him to recover from the past only a solipsistic feeling of erotic exaltation. The "keen pang of lust" that assails him at the touch of Gretta's "body, musical and strange and perfumed" (216) is directed to a woman whose weariness and tension he clearly registers, yet fails to question. When she mounts the stairs before him, with "her head bowed in the ascent, her frail shoulders curved as with a burden" (216–17), he can only feel his physical desire, and when her face looks to him "so serious and weary" that he has to check himself, he only thinks of how to "master her strange mood" (217).

The temporal dynamics that finally activate Gabriel's moral awakening are more complex than those at play in "The Eternal Moment"; it is, in fact, the intersection of Gretta's past with Gabriel's present that indirectly prompts his epiphanic vision.[10] Near the end of the story, when he feels humiliated by the awareness of his emotional inadequacy and his lack of

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centrality to his wife's existence, Gabriel, like Miss Raby, experiences a temporal leap, a moment of vision in which his infancy, youth, and maturity are synchronically condensed. From this new perspective he can finally decipher his own image, whose expression until now has, significantly, "always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror" (219) and "see" his secret self. Only then is he able to evaluate himself and his whole existence:

> A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, [a] pitiable fatuous fellow. (221)

This essential moment of self-knowledge is a traumatic experience that disrupts his sense of stability, but at that crucial moment Gabriel is capable of authentic feelings of love and human understanding:

> Her voice was veiled and sad. Gabriel . . . caressed one of her hands . . . it did not respond to his touch but he continued to caress it just as he had caressed her first letter to him that spring morning. . . . He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife . . . Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. . . . The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. (221–25)

The tender caress to his sleeping wife and the "generous tears" that fill his eyes are clear tokens of moral regeneration.

Contrary to Feo, Gabriel then is able to break out of a stagnant present that alienates him from himself and from others and is reintegrated in a temporal dimension which, reconciling past and present, allows him to enter the world of "otherness." At the end of his descent into the secret space of his inner self, Gabriel's external and inner time coincide, and in his new present, charged with Gretta's and his own past, he can find an axiological center around which to reorganize his life. In his essential loneliness, when he abandons himself to a "swoon" that many interpret as symbolic of spiritual death, Gabriel experiences a mysterious sense of communion not only with "the vast hosts of the dead" (223), the indistinct shadows that silently come to fill his room, but also with the living: his final westward choice, though pointing toward the setting of the sun, and metaphorically of human life, is also a choice for the West of Gretta. Thus, in the pervasive oppression that hovers over *Dubliners,* "The Dead" sounds an unexpected note of hope.

At the end of Joyce's story, in the closing image of the snow that softly falls "through the universe . . . upon all the living and the dead" (223), as in Forster's narrative, space and time dissolve and dilate into a cosmic vision

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that encompasses eternity. Yet the final silences that seal the two stories are charged with a totally different suggestion: Where "The Eternal Moment" conveys a sense of incommunicability and isolation, "The Dead" suggests a sense of reconciliation and communion. Joyce's short story avoids the schematism and the didactic intention clearly perceptible in Forster's. While the latter depicts a completed and irreversible process that crystallizes Vorta into a warning, Joyce delineates a process *in fieri,* in its becoming, that still leaves room for hope. As a consequence, the fictional world of Forster appears unproblematic and clear, while the world of Joyce, so full of nuances and overtones, retains an essential ambiguity; this might be the reason why "The Eternal Moment" transmits a clear message to its readers, whereas "The Dead" communicates a subtle emotion. Beyond such differences, though, the dualistic rendering of time, its metaphorical significance, and the particular narrative function that it explicates, so strikingly analogous in the two short stories, seem to attest to a very similar conceptual and emotional response to Bergson's time theories on the part of their authors.

NOTES

[1] Darwinian theory shook the theological-metaphysical conception of human existence by replacing the reassuring myth of a divine origin with the scientific hypothesis of an undifferentiated magma as the only origin of life on our planet. The second law of thermodynamics, in prefiguring the death by cold of the entire universe as the final event in the irreversible chain of causality that governs physical phenomena, projected a nihilistic vision that seriously challenged all claims to an axiological foundation of human life.

[2] Of the many interesting publications dealing with time, the following are particularly relevant to our discussion: Barletta, *Chronos: figure filosofiche del tempo;* Coveney and Highfield, *Arrow of Time: A Voyage through Science to Solve Time's Greatest Mystery;* Davies, *About Time;* Elias, *Time: An Essay;* Fraser, *Time, the Familiar Stranger;* Poulet, *Studies in Human Time;* and Reale, *La psicologia del tempo.*

[3] "Time, understood in the sense of a medium in which we make distinctions and count, is nothing but space" *(Time and Free Will* 91).

[4] "Daily experience ought to teach us to distinguish between duration as quality, that which consciousness reaches immediately . . . and time so to speak materialized, time that has become quantity by being set out in space" *(Time and Free Will* 127).

[5]

> Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live,* when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. . . . In recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another. (*Time and Free Will* 100)

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Later on, in *Creative Evolution* (first published in French in 1907), Bergson seems to identify duration with life itself: "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (7).

[6] Although some of these authors may not have had first-hand knowledge of Bergson, his theories certainly were very much in the air at the time. As Douglass points out, T. E. Hulme "set out to transmit Bergsonian thought to the English-speaking world" and "preached Bergson to Pound and Eliot" (3). Eliot also had direct access to Bergson's theories by attending some of his lectures at the Collège de France at the beginning of 1911; and in a letter to Eudo Mason dated 19 April 1945, he admitted to having suffered a "temporary conversion to Bergsonism" (qtd. in Johnson 206). On the same topic see also Le Brun.

[7] Bakhtin's observations on the "cyclical daily time" that frames the story of *Madame Bovary* and has "no advancing historical movement" may well apply to Joyce's "The Dead":

> Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still . . . It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space. And therefore it cannot serve as the primary time of the novel. Novelists use it as ancillary time, one that may be interwoven with other noncyclical temporal sequences or used merely to intersperse such sequences; it often serves as a contrasting background for temporal sequences that are more charged with energy and event. (248)

[8] Although many scholars essentially agree with Ellmann and Goldberg, who consider "The Dead" as a journey of spiritual development, others interpret its end in rather negative terms. Peake, for example, sees it as a "critical evocation of resignation to spiritual death" (53). Reynolds compares Gabriel's final vision of a snow-covered Ireland to Dante's description of a frozen world in the *Inferno* (124). It seems clear to me that Gabriel's final decision to turn westward is, symbolically, a recovery of his Irish identity and a token of a future reunion with Gretta.

[9] On his entrance on the scene Gabriel literally shines with artificial light—his black hair is "glossy" (174), his "polished lenses" scintillate in their "bright gilt rims," he flicks "lustre into his shoes" (174)—and he wears galoshes to defend himself from the cold and snow. Though he "likes music," Gabriel has no talent for it, and as a teacher and literary reviewer, his social role is dependent on linguistic ability: The climactic event of the party is the pompously rhetorical little speech that he delivers to people whom he regards as culturally inferior.

[10] As regards the moment and the nature of Gabriel's crucial epiphany, critical opinions differ. Walzl, for instance, affirms that "Gabriel's great moment of epiphany is his personal vision of the cemetery in Oughterard. . . . This moment of epiphanic insight is the climax of the story and the book, and its reality is that of an individual consciousness" (123).

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The Ethics of Indecency: Censorship, Sexuality, and the Voice of the Academy in the Narration of *Jacob's Room*

Susan C. Harris

Although much of the plot of *Jacob's Room* deals with Jacob's sexual education, the narrative voice is spectacularly reticent when it comes to actually recording his progress. Throughout the novel, anything spoken on the topic of sexual desire or sexual activity is subjected to a very specific and ostentatious kind of censorship that cuts overt discussion of sex or sexual desire out of the text even as it directs the reader's attention to the lacunae left behind. This "artificial and deliberate . . . narrative reticence" (Zwerdling 900) is partially a critique of how Jacob's (and Woolf's) contemporaries dealt with sexuality; it also helps Woolf parody the conventions of the bildungsroman, which require the hero's sexual education to assume a central role.[1] But the narrative's refusal to record Jacob's sexual education is more than just a satire on Edwardian prudery. The narrative censor in *Jacob's Room* dramatizes what Foucault calls "the great process of transforming sex into discourse" (22); it "speaks verbosely of its own silence" and "takes great pains to relate in detail the things it does not say" (Foucault 8). Its object is not to remove sexuality from the novel, but to police it by turning it into a narrative that can be controlled.

By deliberately incorporating this censor into the narration, and by inviting the reader to observe its methods and motives, Woolf makes the policing of sexuality in Edwardian England one of the central issues of *Jacob's Room*. The main business of this study is to trace the operations of that censor and examine the intimate relationship between the project of regulating sexuality and the other, apparently unrelated, effects of power that are dramatized in the novel, including Jacob's death in World War I. Naturally

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Foucault's discussion of the regulation of desire in *The History of Sexuality* will provide much of the framework and some of the vocabulary for this argument; but while Foucault's model is in many ways peculiarly applicable to this novel, there are also some important points of divergence between Foucault's construction of sexual discourse and the discourse circulating in *Jacob's Room.*

Perhaps the most significant point of divergence is that while Foucault is infamous for eliding the question of agency and refusing to locate the power that regulates sexuality in any specific "group of institutions and mechanisms" or any discrete "system of dominance exerted by one group over another" (92), the narrative construction of *Jacob's Room* argues that Woolf had specific ideas about who and what wielded that power. Woolf carefully entwines the narrative strand that follows Jacob's sexual education with the one following his intellectual education until the two finally become inseparable; the same narrator that regulates sexual discourse in the novel also trumpets the values of the intellectual culture that molded Jacob. By showing that the success of this regulatory project is necessary to the continued dominance of the academy and its values, Woolf ensures that the reader's knowledge of the censor's misdeeds also indicts Cambridge and what it represents, and that the war that rips Jacob out of his narrative finally becomes a damning metaphor for the academy's attempt to protect its secrets.

Before we can discuss this peculiar form of censorship we must come to some understanding of how narration works in *Jacob's Room.* Critical opinion on this head has evolved over time from an assumed equation between Woolf and the narrative voice of her novel to a recognition of the complicated ironic distance between Woolf and her characters (Morgenstern 351). Still, a puzzling determination to see the narrator as a monologic, unitary voice with a distinct identity seems to prevail. Writing in 1972, Barry Morgenstern announced that the narrator of *Jacob's Room* was in fact "a thirty-five year old woman," and proceeded to draw her a short personality profile (353); 14 years later, Karen Lawrence's more sophisticated critique of narrative voice in *Jacob's Room* still insists on a single narrator who is "a woman, ten years older than Jacob" with "a distinct personality" (33–4). In 1992, Edward Bishop, while recognizing that the narrator is "both character and device," still treats her as "an autonomous self" ("Subject" 166). Even Zwerdling's illuminating discussion of the narrator's satiric function assumes a single narrative voice whose underlying intentions are essentially sincere. Because that assumption continues to identify the narrative voice as a more

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or less disguised version of the author's, it cannot admit the operation of a voice within the narrative whose language is disingenuous and whose manipulations of character, plot, and structure are dishonest and destructive. And because the censorial narrator is precisely this type of presence, we must complicate that conception of the narrator before we can understand the function of the censor.

Judy Little's observation that much of the humor in *Jacob's Room* derives from a "radically unconventional switch in perspective" between an "omniscient narrator" with access to "the ironic truth" and a second narrator who can only "[guess] at Jacob's words or thoughts" (106) is helpful here. As Little points out, the question of whether these two narrators can be characterized as separate, discrete entities or as two modes of the same voice is not particularly important; what matters is the interplay between these different modes and especially, for our purposes, the power struggle in which they are joined. It is with the "omniscient" and ironic narrator that Little defines, and with that narrator's methods of taking and keeping control of the narrative, that this paper will be primarily concerned.

Taking Little's identification of the double narrative voice one step further, William Handley claims that Woolf's narrative technique reflects Bakhtin's conception of language as "thoroughly social in that it constitutes as it is constituted by communities of human subjects" (Handley 111). In other words, the narrator's "voice" is not unitary, but "variform" (Bakhtin 261)—inhabited by the many voices of Jacob's culture. Handley's argument is based on the assumption, shared by many of his critical predecessors, that *Jacob's Room* is not finally about Jacob, but about the world that forms him. Different critics offer variations on Dowling's assertion that the novel is "Woolf's painting of the world" (64), a painting that includes the depiction of "the problem of cultural inclusion and exclusion" (Lawrence 31) and a resultant critique of "the machinery that would have assured [Jacob] a place in *Who's Who*" and "sends him off to war instead" (Zwerdling 904). If this is a novel concerned not so much with inner characters as with the "social forces . . . [that] shape their internal reality" (Handley 112), it would stand to reason that the form of the narrative as well as the content would reflect and criticize those forces.

In a novel as highly parodic and ironic as this one, narration naturally becomes, then, not the monologue of a unitary voice, but the interplay of the multitudinous voices whose dialogue constructs the cultural edifice within which Jacob moves.[2] Narration in this novel makes explicit the internal dialogism that Bakhtin identified in the Word itself, using different and differing narrative voices to interrupt, interrogate, and discredit each other. While these voices cannot be said to constitute separate, autonomous char-

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acters, they represent different value systems and remain loyal to different agendas. In a novel deeply concerned with a patriarchal society's methods of "inclusion and exclusion," some of those voices will naturally be loyal to, and speak the language of, the academy. Distinguishing these different voices, where they are distinguishable, and recognizing their sites of conflict help us trace the voice of the academy and investigate the connection between it and the project of regulating sexuality.

One of the conflicts between different narrative voices rages around the characterization of Florinda, a minor player whose role in the novel has been somewhat underexamined precisely because of the intensity of this battle.[3] Contempt for her character comes through to the reader so blatantly that it is hard not to assume that Woolf herself is behind this "obvious mockery" of "the brainless Florinda" (Zwerdling 901). To argue that Florinda is in fact a well-developed character whose psychological complexities are central to the novel would certainly strain credulity; but at the same time, the narrative treatment of Florinda is both more complicated and more important than a simple satirical sketch of an empty-headed grisette. What happens to Florinda is part of a strategy designed to showcase the tactics used by the censors in Jacob's world to prevent sexuality from speaking for itself.

It must be admitted at the outset that Florinda cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be said to be a misunderstood genius. Even in a novel where conversation is fragmentary and most dialogue is less than profound, Florinda's utterances stand out as phenomenally banal: "I'm so frightfully unhappy!" (74); "I think there are lovely things in the British museum . . ." "You're such a *good* man" (80). Descriptions of Florinda stress her inability to read (78–79) or to express herself in writing (94); through Jacob's eyes, she is "wild and frail and beautiful" (78) or "straight and beautiful in body" (82), but if "beauty goes hand in hand with stupidity" (82) this only serves to underscore the fact that she is "as ignorant as an owl" (79). It occurs to the reader, long before it occurs to Jacob, to "wonder whether she [has] a mind" (79), and the answer to the question seems fairly self-evident.

But Woolf also hints that before accepting that answer, it is important to consider how and why it was produced. The contempt Jacob obviously feels for Florinda by the end of the affair is at times shared by the narrator; but the narrator that so despises Florinda has an ulterior motive for producing this portrait. A brainless, ignorant, "animal" (168) Florinda helps the censorial narrator accomplish its particular purpose—a purpose that has grim implications not only for the other women in Jacob's life but for Jacob. Florinda, as characterized by the satirical narrator, "links the inexistent, the illicit and the inexpressible" and makes it possible for sexuality

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(and anyone identified with it) to be apparently "banished from reality" (Foucault 84).

The initial description of Florinda, which is given to us before her name or personality are sketched in, is written in a voice that is markedly different from that which usually describes her—a voice that, specifically, is far less sarcastic. Both the style and the content of this first portrait warn the reader that whatever other narrators may say afterward about Florinda, any narrative vision of her is doomed to be less than penetrating:

> Of the faces which came out fresh and vivid as though painted in yellow and red, the most prominent was the girl's face. By a trick of the firelight she seemed to have no body. The oval of the face and hair hung beside the fire with a dark vacuum for background. As if dazed by the glare, her green-blue eyes stared at the flames. Every muscle of her face was taut. There was something tragic in her thus staring—her age between twenty and twenty-five. (74)

Florinda appears to the descriptive eye as disembodied, a stiff, "painted" and hollow mask over a "vacuum," and there is "something tragic" about the emptiness of the "staring" eyes. It is clear that this narrator, and thus the reader, is allowed to see only the surface, the reflecting veneer, and that whatever is beneath it is to remain unknowable. This narrator acknowledges that what it grasps is a shell, not substance.

Immediately after this has been established, "a hand descending from the chequered darkness thrust[s] on her head the conical white hat of a pierrot" (74). An unseen power forces an identity onto this image, and the previously unreadable mask now becomes part of a costume designed for a particular kind of stock character. Unable to get past the mask, the narrator is now working with the shell, manipulating the mask, animating the silhouette. A vision of Florinda is taking shape; but through the window opened by the first narrator we see that it is taking shape under protest, at the hands of a shadowy and coercive power, and taking a shape that will reflect that power's attitudes and intentions rather than those of the initial narrator, who in this passage demonstrates her consciousness of the limitations of narrative power.

After the initial narrator's description, the characterization of Florinda is handed over to what Zwerdling calls the "satiric narrator"—an "older, more experienced, highly skeptical consciousness" whose ironic intrusions work against any "stable sense of [Woolf's] own attitude toward the world she describes" (894), and also presumably prevent any comforting identification between reader and narrator (or reader and Jacob). Zwerdling attributes this effect primarily to Woolf's "satiric intent" (901) as an ironic

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elegist. But the satiric narrator is entrusted with more important functions than that of "correct[ing] romantic excess" or providing "ironic detachment" (901) from Jacob; and one of those is that of censor. Through its characterization of Florinda, the satiric narrator reveals itself as vitally concerned with disabling, silencing, and dismissing those who might be able to testify to the presence and nature of sexuality in Jacob's life and in *Jacob's Room,* with ensuring that characters who feel sexual attraction for Jacob or inspire it in him can never tell themselves, or tell the reader, what they know.

When the satiric narrator takes over, Florinda is "still wearing the conical white hat of a pierrot" (77)—still defined by the action of that unseen hand. The satiric narrator's description is thus marked immediately as an external imposition, a coercive manipulation. And the first thing we learn is that her name itself is an imposition, "bestowed upon her by a painter who wished it to signify that the flower of her maidenhood was still unplucked" (77). The satiric narrator thus creates her as an allegorical figure for whom constructed, imposed archetypal meaning has displaced any kind of individual subjectivity. Since the narrator's account of her baptism links that meaning directly to the state of her chastity, chastity becomes abnormally important to Florinda's character, and she is forced to "[talk] more about virginity than women mostly do" (77). Thanks to the painter, and the narrative voice that admits him into the story, Florinda as a character is flattened until the question of "[w]hether or not she was a virgin" threatens to become "the only thing of any importance at all" (79).

This narrator's insistence on keeping Florinda's chastity *questionable* while simultaneously introducing evidence that could easily resolve any doubt is an early indication of its subtler designs. Florinda's baptism is an act of wishful thinking—an attempt to deny and erase sexual experience that both the anonymous painter and this narrator no doubt know she has had. It is an obvious deletion; and its location in this passage identifies the satiric narrator as a primary vehicle for narrative censorship. But the satiric narrator performs this censorship in a way that seems bound to draw attention to the very experience it is ostensibly trying to suppress. It is important to this narrator to prevent anyone reading Florinda from either believing "implicitly" in her chastity—which even Jacob at his most naive cannot bring himself to do—or being absolutely certain of her unchastity. Her virginity must be kept in doubt—the story must be changed—the truth must not be told, because this ambiguity allows the satiric narrator to keep any candid discussion of sexuality out of the narrative. If this project is to succeed (and, as will be shown, the satiric narrator is backed by powerful cultural forces that very much want it to), Florinda must perform a very specific function,

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one that involves both perpetually losing and perpetually retaining her chastity.

After all, if the narrator is worried about keeping sexuality quiet, why include Florinda at all? Why include Fanny, Clara, Laurette, Sandra Wentworth Williams, Captain Barfoot, Bonamy, or any of the other sexual activity that is introduced to the narrative only to be confined to the margins? If the satiric narrator's objective is a total, seamless, and self-concealing deletion of any mention of sexuality, then it would seem to be far more incompetent as a censor than it is as a satirist. This kind of suppression is either not within this narrator's power, or not what this narrator really wants. This narrator's treatment of Florinda—like its treatment of Clara and Bonamy—indicates that censorship in *Jacob's Room* is not suppression per se but the strategic production of ambiguity and implication. And that strategy proves to be absolutely necessary to the preservation of the value system to which the satiric narrator has pledged its loyalty.

To get a better sense of what that strategy is, and what values it protects, it may help to look at what Woolf herself went through when writing *Jacob's Room*. The process of editing out overt sexuality began at the revision stage, and is part of a larger "shift in Woolf's focus" from a concern with "the lives of *individual*" characters to a desire to expose the "dominant ideology of a society which was capable of sending 'young men in the prime of life' off to their deaths" (Flint 362). The changes she makes in order to focus on the societal machinery responsible for Jacob's character as well as his death tighten the link between narrative treatment of sexuality and narrative treatment of high culture and higher education.

Bishop, in his study of the manuscript revisions of *Jacob's Room,* remarks on the deletion of this rather significant passage concerning Florinda:

> Oh Jacob, said the girl as they pounded up the hill in the dark, "I'm so frightfully unhappy!" You're not a Jew, are you? she said. "I do hate Jews . . . And she told him how a Jew had played her a dirty trick, leaving all his dirty clothes scattered over the room, & she having to pawn her mother's watch to pay the rent. (qtd. in Bishop, "Shaping" 121)

Had this passage been let stand, Florinda's status as an allegorical figure of virginity would be even more fragile than it is now; the reader, knowing that Florinda has just been abandoned by a live-in lover, would find it difficult to even pretend to suspend a decision about "whether or not she was a virgin." This revision allows that all-important shadow of a doubt to survive.

Other revisions help maintain the ambiguous space in which Florinda's chastity and related matters can be discussed suggestively rather than ei-

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ther completely suppressed or overtly demonstrated. A long extemporization on bodily "functions & desires" including "copulation upstairs in the double bed" is excised from the Mrs. Pascoe digression; references to "the idea of copulation" and "her son's chastity" are deleted from Betty Flanders's reflections (Flint 367–68). Jacob's unspoken declaration of love for Clara, his deliberations over whether to kiss Sandra, and their actual kiss also disappear (Bishop, "Shaping" 123–25). And as these "direct references to sexuality and intimate relations" are deleted, "the patriarchal emphasis of Jacob's Cambridge education is underscored" (Flint 370).[4] As discussion of Jacob's sexual education becomes more and more allusive and euphemistic, discussion of his intellectual education becomes clearer and more pointed. As the voice of sexuality subsides into ambiguity, the voice of the academy rings out louder and stronger.

The significance of this relationship between the academy and sexuality is first hinted at when Jacob reads Bonamy his diatribe against Professor Bulteel's bowdlerized edition of Wycherly. Jacob's response is presented as an idealistic excoriation of academic hypocrisy:

> An outrage, Jacob said; a breach of faith; sheer prudery; token of a lewd mind and a disgusting nature. Aristophanes and Shakespeare were cited. Modern life was repudiated. Great play was made with the professional title, and Leeds as a seat of learning was laughed to scorn. And the extraordinary thing was that these young men were perfectly right—extraordinary, because, even as Jacob copied his pages, he knew that no one would ever print them; and sure enough they came back from the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, the *Nineteenth Century* . . . The lid shut upon truth. (70)

But what Jacob intends as a defense of intellectual freedom eventually becomes his pledge of allegiance to the censorial tactics of his academy, the "faith" that upholds Cambridge and which Bulteel, in his clumsiness, has broken.[5]

By ridiculing "Leeds as a seat of learning," Jacob hints that Bulteel's methods are the result not simply of his "lewd mind" but of his inability to understand and adopt the finer methods of censorial control. In assuming that his job as an academic is to protect the public by removing from its literature any reference to sexuality, the uncouth Bulteel has gotten it half right. Control is part of the academic mission, but Bulteel's unsophisticated methods merely exacerbate the danger by telegraphing the fact that something has been deleted. The real mission of the academy, as Jacob's citation of Aristophanes and Shakespeare demonstrates, is not to delete sexual experience and desire, but to render it cryptic by couching it in language that

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is a barrier to the layman. Both playwrights rely heavily on sexually explicit humor, but since Aristophanes wrote in ancient Greek and Shakespeare's slang is no longer current, the academy and its products must now mediate between this humor and its consumers. That process of mediation allows them to control the expression of the forces behind it.

By writing his piece and by bringing in Shakespeare and Aristophanes as evidence, Jacob is arguing for the preservation of sexuality in canonical literature—but only on the academy's terms. What Jacob's tirade demonstrates is how heavily invested the academy is in regulating the discourse of sexuality. By first encrypting and then decoding sexuality in the works of Aristophanes and Shakespeare, Fielding and Keats, "Mozart and Bishop Berkeley" (79), the patriarchal canon and its devotees retain control over the impulse that, if it were left in the hands of a thinking Florinda, would burst uncontrollably into the open and perhaps set something on fire.

The danger Florinda would pose if the satirical narrator did not keep her in her place becomes clearer in the paragraphs that close the first extended description of her:

> Late home-comers could see shadows against the blinds even in the most respectable suburbs. Not a square in snow or fog lacked its amorous couple. All plays turned on the same subject. Bullets went through heads in hotel bedrooms almost nightly on that account. When the body escaped mutilation, seldom did the heart go to the grave unscarred. Little else was talked of in theatres and popular novels. Yet we say it is a matter of no importance at all. (79)

It here refers to the question of whether or not Florinda was a virgin. Obviously, by this point, that question has expanded to take on abstract and far-reaching significance. Florinda's questionable virginity is transformed into a universal, all-powerful sexual impulse that keeps everyone up late, an impulse that drives people to suicide, heartbreak, and popular fiction.

Pervasive as this power is, however, the satiric narrator can still keep it unseen, in the shadows, in silhouette, in "snow or fog," behind the anonymous door of a hotel bedroom. It is discussed—but in the realm of the theater and the popular novel, not in the realm of "high" culture, whose function, the narrator implies, is to keep it under wraps:

> What with Shakespeare and Adonais, Mozart and Bishop Berkeley—choose whom you like—the fact is concealed and the evenings for most of us pass reputably, or with only the sort of tremor that a snake makes sliding through the grass. (79)

This concluding passage definitively identifies the satiric narrator and its censorial function with high culture and its defenders. The mission of

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"art"—the kind of art that the satiric narrator wants this novel to be—is to conceal the power of sexuality so that time may pass "reputably." And as the narrator's admission seems to hint, that concealment can only work if the audience is aware of what is happening. Rather than excising sexuality completely and leaving a suspicious and speculation-inviting gap where it would have been, the satiric narrator offers this self-revealing concealment as a bribe to our curiosity. The continued dominance and primacy of the academic culture to which the narrator has now declared its allegiance depend on our agreeing to leave ambiguity unresolved, on our decision not to explore the abyss and content ourselves with academia's gift to us, the ripple in the grass.

Florinda, then, is included precisely in order to effect this "concealment"—to allow Jacob to follow his sexual impulses and yet, at the same time, believe "himself a man and Florinda chaste" (78). Florinda is shallow, witless, fickle, and artificial—but she has been made so by the satiric narrator because without her the culture to which that voice has shown itself loyal cannot be preserved. If Florinda had been allowed to name herself, to create her own identity, to be more successful at communication, the question of her chastity would be resolved, and ambiguity would vanish. "If Florinda had had a mind, she might have read with clearer eyes than we can" (79); in other words, a thinking Florinda might see through the satiric narrator's dependence on concealment, and if she were allowed to say what she saw, the regulatory project would fail and the narrator's narrative would never be able to take its place next to Adonais in the company of Shakespeare and Mozart. Florinda, therefore, must not be allowed to have a mind. She must not be able to see what we are kept from seeing, and under no circumstances must she be able to communicate to us what she has seen.

So eventually the satiric narrator communicates its contempt to Jacob, and he sees Florinda as "horribly brainless" when she sits at dinner "staring" (80). But her stare is alarming now not because it is vacuous, but because it is directed at something she is not supposed to be seeing.[6] Calling her stare "brainless" defuses it, makes it harmless, deprives it of any power to penetrate or reveal. Having discredited her vision, the narrator then mocks Florinda's attempts at writing, comparing her to "a butterfly, gnat, or other winged insect, attached to a twig which, clogged with mud, it rolls across a page" (94). In calling her "sentiments infantile" and her "spelling abominable" the narrator makes sure that Florinda has nothing to say and no way to say it, thus neutralizing her as a witness. The reader will believe the satiric narrator, which has already demonstrated its cultivation and erudition by citing "Shakespeare and Adonais, Mozart and Bishop Berkeley,"

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before giving any credibility to the "ignorant . . . owl" it has so completely ridiculed.

The satiric narrator, then, in performing its censorial function as flamboyantly as it does, is not silencing the narrative of Jacob's sexual education so much as straining to keep that narrative contained within the boundaries of academic discourse, where it can be properly regulated. But the ultimate fate of Jacob's "Ethics of Indecency" should remind us that as self-dramatizing as high culture's censorship of sexuality is, the effectiveness of the academy's censorial project depends on keeping some things secret. The academy's power over the expression of sexuality is "tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself" (Foucault 86). The academy does not want outsiders to understand the real nature of its ethic of indecency; the world is to be content with the ripple in the grass and not to make itself aware of the true relationship between patriarchal culture and sexual desire—or that relationship's broader implications. So society and the academy shut the lid on truth; and woe betide anyone, even an insider like Jacob, who threatens to open it again.

Both the satiric or, as it may now be more useful to call it, the academic narrator and the cultural machinery it serves are at least partially successful in retaining control over the expression and discussion of sexuality in *Jacob's Room* and in Jacob's world; so much so that women like Clara, rather than expose themselves to the Florinda treatment, internalize the process and censor themselves:

> "I like Jacob Flanders," wrote Clara Durrant in her diary. "He is so unworldly. He gives himself no airs and one can say what one likes to him, though he's frightening because . . ." But Mr. Letts allows little space in his shilling diaries. Clara was not the one to encroach upon Wednesday. (71)

Clara stops obediently at the prescribed limits of expression, just as things are about to get "frightening." Clara does not have to be silenced and discredited as Florinda was because she knows when to stop and what not to stare at. Clara has learned to "renounce [her]self" rather than "suffer the penalty of being suppressed" (Foucault 84). She remains "candid," clear-eyed, and pure because she voluntarily declines to testify, to look at what it is that frightens her. Nice girls know better than to encroach upon Wednesday.

However, as the narrative focus shifts away from Jacob's women, the narrator's control over sexual discourse appears to weaken, and it begins to look as if it may be possible for some things to slip through its net. The actions of Woolf's censor and Foucault's description of the regulation of

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sexual desire begin to diverge as the academic narrator encounters forms of sexuality that seem able to defeat its attempts at sublimation and control. By localizing the regulation of sexuality within a specific institutional complex—the academy and the cultural values it supports—Woolf identifies a discrete target that can be directly attacked as Foucault's seamless web of power relations cannot be. In Woolf's paradigm there are some subjects that the academy cannot afford to touch, even in order to sublimate and redirect them through discourse. As those subjects approach the foreground, they force the academic narrator to take steps that destroy its "ability to hide [its] own mechanisms" (Foucault 86) and thus the overall effectiveness of the academy's regulatory project.

As Clara and Florinda recede, the academic narrator finds its job getting harder and harder. Consorting with mindless prostitutes or timid debutantes is all very well; but Jacob is also in touch with something that could be even more dangerous to the patriarchal academy than a thinking Florinda or an audacious Clara. The most formidable threat to the academy's control over sexuality is Bonamy, not Florinda. And as Jacob's trip to Greece and consequent affair with Sandra Wentworth Williams push Bonamy's sexual desire for Jacob closer to the surface, the finer methods of censorial control become insufficient. To keep the secret, the censorial narrator must resort to more and more drastic modes of censorship.

Woolf's choice of Greece for Jacob's first trip abroad is not an arbitrary one. The academy that produced Jacob "claims for its own the precepts of Athens"; a full indoctrination into the English intelligentsia's prevailing and peculiar brand of classicism "constituted a young man's education at Cambridge" (Moss 47). For Woolf, who combines an idealistic "enthusiasm for the language" of the ancient Greeks with a keen awareness that she and most other women have never been and will never be taught Greek early and long enough to read Aristophanes or Sophocles in the original, this idolatry of ancient Greece as "the founding culture of Western civilization" is a primary symbol of the prohibitive "exclusivity" that marks Jacob's education (Bishop, "Subject" 171). Woolf is sending Jacob to confront the elitist and antifeminist values at the core of the patriarchal academy.

This confrontation initially brings Jacob only disillusionment and depression; Greece itself fails to correspond to the "Greek myth" (137). For the first time, Jacob begins to show some feeble sparks of insight as he wonders whether "respectability and evening parties where one has to dress" might be "at the back of" the "unhappiness" he has begun to experience; for the first time, he finds that "the British Empire" is "beginning to puzzle him" (139). And for the first time, the information that Bonamy "couldn't

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love a woman" (140) and "was fonder of Jacob than of any one in the world" definitively enters the narrative.

As Eve Sedgwick demonstrates in her reading of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the "Victorian cult of Greece" (136) that informs Jacob's Cambridge education simultaneously promotes, requires, and denies homosexual desire within the academy. The academy's fetishization of a classical culture that was often "[s]ynecdochically represented . . . by statues of nude young men" ultimately "positioned male flesh and muscle as the indicative instances of 'the' body, of a body whose surfaces, features, or abilities might be the subject of unphobic enjoyment" (136). The academy's treatment of the female body and its sexuality (of which the academic narrator's depiction of Florinda is a prime example) thus coincides with a "new gendering" of the "enjoyed body" as "indicatively male" (136); the sexual desire that is dangerous when directed at Florinda becomes safe and sanctioned when sublimated into the "intimacy between friends" that "intellectual conversation" (Little 113) about their shared culture makes possible between Jacob and his Cambridge classmates.

Evidence of this Cambridge-induced redirection of sexual desire is introduced into the novel even before Jacob gets to Greece. Little observes that intellectual debate is "enjoyed as a sensuous event—by Jacob and by the narrator" (113); for both the product and the defender of the academy, this kind of exchange, which thanks to Oxford's and Cambridge's admission policies can take place only between men, produces a sexualized pleasure. This pleasure does not remain purely cerebral; at one point early in the novel Jacob and Bonamy's "educated joust for words spills over into a very physical wrestling match" (Dobie 206). Mrs. Papworth obligingly confirms the theory that Cambridge is the ultimate cause of this eruption into physicality: "Book learning does it" (Dobie 206).

But while the academy's "Hellenic ideal" redirects sexual desire so that it is kept among its (exclusively male) members and under its control, and thus apparently sanctions male homosexual desire, the academy also, at the same time, "necessarily has [homosexual] panic so deeply at the heart" of its value system that the academy "becomes not only inextricable from but even a propellant of the cognitive and ethical compartmentalizations of homophobic prohibition" (Sedgwick 138). The homophobia that Jeremy Tambling identifies in the London of *Mrs. Dalloway* (144) also operates in *Jacob's Room*, both within and outside the academy. To protect itself, the academy must conceal from itself and from outsiders the redirection of sexual desire on which its continued dominance depends. It must create Bonamy and his desire, and it must censor that desire just as it censors Florinda and Clara.

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But as Jacob goes to Greece and becomes more and more "immersed" in his chosen culture, the erotic element of Bonamy's relationship with him irresistibly approaches the foreground. And for all its finesse in handling Florinda and Clara, the academic narrator proves impotent when it comes to silencing Bonamy. Part of the difficulty is that Bonamy is not only a man, but a man even more fully initiated into academic culture than Jacob is. He cannot be silenced, as Florinda and Clara are, by an ironic disquisition on his ignorance or blindness. Descriptions of Bonamy, even disparaging ones, somehow cannot help taking on a more reverent tone than those of Jacob's female attachments:

> I like books whose virtue is all drawn together in a page or two. I like sentences that don't budge though armies cross them. I like words to be hard—such were Bonamy's views, and they won him the hostility of those whose taste is all for the fresh growths of the morning. . . . That his taste in literature affected his friendships, and made him silent, secretive, fastidious, and only quite at ease with one or two young men of his own way of thinking, was the charge against him. (140)

The only "charge" the narrator can level against Bonamy is that of becoming too perfectly initiated into the academy, of letting his education determine his personality more completely than it ought to. Bonamy is the perfect product of everything the satiric narrator is loyal to. The academy cannot silence one of its own the same way it could silence Florinda.

A more serious problem with Bonamy is that, paradoxically, because the perceived taboo against homosexual desire is even stronger than the one that dictates female chastity, it is harder for the narrator to keep Bonamy's sexual orientation *questionable* like Florinda's chastity. The assumption that homosexuality will not enter into the makeup of a character or a narrative is so strong that any hints of it provoke a curiosity that is not willing to satisfy itself with an ambiguous tremor in the grass, and a hint—or even a particularly well-placed silence—can function as ocular proof, as we see from the character-mongering discussion in chapter 12:

> And that is the very reason, so they said, why she attracts Dick Bonamy—the young man with the Wellington nose. Now *he's* a dark horse if you like. And there these gossips would suddenly pause. Obviously they meant to hint at his peculiar disposition—long rumored among them. (154)

The hint has been dropped, and if the narrative censor is doing its job, the conversation should stop while Bonamy's homosexuality is still "rumored" and deniable—but it doesn't:

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> "But sometimes it is precisely a woman like Clara that men of that temperament need . . ." Miss Julia Eliot would hint.
> "Well," Mr. Bowley would reply, "it may be so."

Silence has blossomed into euphemism. When Bonamy resurfaces in the same conversation, it is clear this time that everyone involved knows exactly what they are talking about:

> "His friends are very fond of him."
> "Dick Bonamy, you mean?"
> "No, I didn't mean that. It's evidently the other way with Jacob. He is precisely the young man to fall headlong in love and repent it for the rest of his life." (155)

The gossips know, and now so does the reader. Because homosexual desire has been pushed farther into silence and darkness than heterosexual desire, the reader, like the gossips, has taken the habit of using hints to resolve doubt rather than create it.[7] To introduce the question of Bonamy's homosexuality into the narrative is also to resolve it; the ambiguous space collapses and the snake appears in the grass.[8]

But Bonamy *must* somehow be silenced, because the mere connection between Jacob's trip to Greece and the sudden emergence of Bonamy as a character shows us why, as a witness, he is more dangerous than Florinda. To allow Bonamy to testify that his love for Jacob is part and parcel of his membership in the academy—that it was in fact his classical education that "affected his friendships" in this way—that his homoerotic attachment to Jacob is the inevitable result, as an earlier draft of the novel makes clear, of an excessively "fine taste in the classics"—would seriously endanger the structure that supports Cambridge and its values.[9] The academic narrator cannot allow this secret to be made public. Bonamy's testimony would finally confirm that the power of high culture inheres, in part, in its ability to conceal, control, and sublimate sexual desire in all its forms. It would show the reader what Woolf suspects: that the dominance of the patriarchal academy is dependent on men identifying with men and desiring each other—and then denying and redirecting that desire. And that might show the reader how and why English culture promotes the "easy association of the army and the academy" (Tambling 140) that eventually helps to send Jacob and his fellow undergraduates to die in the Great War.

As Tambling notes, Woolf's treatment of Septimus's relationship with Evans in *Mrs. Dalloway* suggests that she was aware of "the unrecognized homosexuality underpinning officer–men relationships" and how the fact that those "feelings . . . [could] not be acknowledged" caused the narrative of sexual desire to be transformed into the "myths of innocent and doomed

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soldier-boys" (148) that eventually helped England resign itself to the mass murder of Jacob's generation. The male–male desire that the academy promotes is not, in itself, the problem that Woolf is attacking; Bonamy's lament in the final scene indicates that Woolf considers his love for Jacob sincere, human, and genuine enough to give him the right to grieve. What makes the academy's promotion of homoerotic attachment dishonest and destructive is the academy's simultaneous insistence on preventing that desire from actually being expressed sexually. Rather than allow its members to reject heterosexuality and with it marriage and the Victorian/Edwardian model of the family (which must also be maintained if the patriarchy is to survive), the academy denies and suppresses that desire by diverting it into other channels.

In this context, the fact that Jacob is "statuesque" (Bishop, "Subject" 168) takes on specific and ominous significance. Jacob's education has turned him into one of the "statues of nude young men" (Sedgwick 136) admired and desired by the patriarchal academy; he has become not only the proponent of its values, but the object of its desires. And once those desires, under the pressure of the homophobic censor, are diverted from sexual activity that neither the academy nor its milieu is prepared to tolerate into the aggressive activity that Jacob's society finds easier to sanction, the objectified Jacob becomes the victim of the academy's bloodlust just as he was the object of its erotic fascinations.

This modulation from sexual desire to militarism is foreshadowed in the early wrestling match that ends one of Jacob and Bonamy's intellectual debates. Like the infamous wrestling match between Birkin and Gerald Crich in *Women in Love,* Jacob and Bonamy's tussle indicates that rather than allow homosexual desire to be expressed through explicitly sexual contact, the narrator pressures the characters to express it indirectly as violence. Jacob and Bonamy's mock battle serves both to "[parallel] the connection made by Woolf between a Cambridge education and war" (Dobie 206), and to signal to the reader that the subversion and sublimation of homoerotic desire is a necessary link in that chain. Through a different narrator, Woolf would make the connection between the academy and the battlefield much more explicit, much later on in *Three Guineas* (Ingram 127); in *Jacob's Room,* that connection is subtly but dramatically underscored by the final actions of the narrative censor.

The academic narrator's problem worsens as Jacob gets deeper into Greece and deeper into the affair with Sandra, which has the effect of bringing him perilously close to realizing that Bonamy is in love with him. As his infatuation with Sandra intensifies, he decides that "there was something queer about" (147) writing to Bonamy about her; when he begins to feel

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uneasy about his attraction to her, his first impulse is to write and ask Bonamy to come out and distract him (149). The longer Jacob stays in Greece, the more apparent it becomes that Bonamy is pining away in London, until he finally takes the desperate step of visiting Clara just for the chance to "talk about Jacob" (151). And the closer Jacob and Sandra get to consummating their affair, the greater the threat becomes that Bonamy's jealousy will finally boil over into speech.

The narrator attempts to solve the problem by abandoning its tactics of sublimation and, out of desperation, trying the Bulteel method. Sandra's kiss with Jacob on the Acropolis, which was recorded in an early draft of the novel, is torn out of the narrative. In its place is a meditation on the continuing power and permanence of classical Greece:

> They had vanished. There was the Acropolis; but had they reached it? The columns and the Temple remain; the emotion of the living breaks fresh on them year after year; and of that what remains?
>
> As for reaching the Acropolis who will say that we ever do it, or that when Jacob woke next morning he found anything hard and durable to keep forever? Still, he went with them to Constantinople. (160–61)

Daring anyone to doubt that "the Acropolis" will remain forever an ethereal, unattainable goal enshrined in a space that the human body and all its desires can never reach, the academic narrator insists on replacing classical culture in its proper sphere, on giving it a supernatural and eternal power that mere "emotion" can never challenge. By clearing Sandra and Jacob off the stage, the narrator makes an obvious attempt to privilege "the columns and the Temple" over the "emotion of the living," to separate the foundation of academic culture from the sexual desires that are consummated on it.

But in order to make this gesture, the academic narrator must force Jacob and Sandra to disappear, to drop out of the story instantly and completely. They reappear; but this substitution marks an ominous change in censorial method. Where circumlocution and satire fail, the academic narrator is quite willing to resort to excision, even if it means opening up a hole that swallows the main character. The academy is serious about preserving its secret; and rather than allow Bonamy's inevitable declaration to Jacob, the academic narrator will end the story, by any means necessary. To maintain and to conceal the relationship between the power of high culture and the control of sexual desire, it is willing to relegate women to the farthest periphery, to punish those who venture closer to the center, to silence Florinda, to stifle Clara. And if excluding women from the academy

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cannot keep the secret under wraps and the power structures in place, it will take more drastic measures.

Those measures show us that the war into which Jacob disappears is, finally, "not . . . a cause but . . . a symptom" (Bishop 171) of what is wrong with Jacob's world. If, as Roger Moss claims, Jacob's death is "murder at the hands of the author" (45), the author that murders him is the academic narrator. The war that provides the narrator with a suspiciously convenient excuse for Jacob's sudden disappearance thus becomes a metaphor for the academy's censorial tactics. By using Bonamy to make concealment on the academic narrator's terms impossible and thus forcing it to resort to murder, Woolf forces us to realize that this urbane and articulate narrator is ruthless in its devotion to its own self-interest and security. If its dominance is threatened, the academic narrator will strike back, no matter how self-destructive its reprisal ultimately is. It is willing to tear the fabric, to open the abyss; it is ready, if it has to, to kill. And it is ready, finally, to rip Jacob himself out of the narrative and substitute, for the conclusion to his sexual education, Bonamy's grief, blank pages, and a pair of empty shoes.

NOTES

[1] For a fuller discussion of how *Jacob's Room* works as an "attack" on the bildungsroman, see Judy Little.

[2] According to Bakhtin, the parodic and ironic elements of the "comic novel" make it a particularly apt vehicle for "organizing heteroglossia," that is, making internal dialogism explicit in a particularly "vivid" manner (315).

[3] Kathleen Dobie, however, does an interesting reading of Florinda's character in terms of class conflict.

[4] Flint (370–72) gives a detailed account of how this underscoring is accomplished.

[5] Little suggests that this speech is also a laundry list of insights that "every good novelist" (115) should put the hero of his bildungsroman through, so that Jacob's pledge of allegiance to the academy also identifies him more closely with the patriarchal literary model Woolf is parodying.

[6] In this case, Florinda is staring at the table where a couple has just made a public scene, from which everyone else is conspicuously averting their eyes: "Well, poor chap, we mustn't sit staring" (80).

[7] As D. A. Miller points out in his discussion of Hitchcock's *Rope*, the history of the representation of homosexuality is such that "connotation instigates a project of confirmation . . . when, with homosexuality as with nothing else, what is connoted cannot be denoted" (119).

[8] It is interesting that in *Between the Acts*, another novel concerned with the relationship between male sexual desire and military aggression, Woolf reverts to this image: The homosexual William Dodge calls himself a "flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass" (73). Again, there is the implication that he has been forced into this role through his experience at school ("they held me

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under a bucket of dirty water") and Giles makes an emphatic but ineffective attempt to deny and erase Dodge's existence by stomping an actual snake in the grass to death (99).

[9] In the notebook manuscript, Woolf has Jacob thinking of "Bonamy who couldn't fall in love, [he saw] with any woman, & had such fine taste in the classics" (qtd. in Flint 370). As this sentence would make the parallel rather more explicit than Woolf wanted it to be, it was cut from the finished version, but it confirms Woolf's hypothesis of a connection between Bonamy's homosexuality and his classical education.

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Marketing British Modernism: *The Egoist* and Counter-Public Spheres

Mark Morrisson

In pre-WWI London, mass-circulation publications like Alfred Harmsworth's *Comic Cuts* and *Illustrated Chips,* and best-selling novels like Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan,* epitomized a commercial culture that arose alongside a huge increase in the availability of consumer products, and a concomitant expansion of the advertising industry to create markets for new goods.[1] Though Habermas implicates the commercialization of the press in the decline of the liberal public sphere, Edwardian oppositional groups discovered ways to deploy some of the same tactics that made Harmsworth a millionaire in order to unite large publics and support widespread social and political change. Suffragists and radical political groups created discursive spaces outside of the dominant public sphere—what I will call "counter-public spheres"[2]—but the burgeoning commercial mass culture made these counter-public spheres viable. Commodity ads funded suffrage papers; public spectacles and popular advertising campaigns helped package, publicize, and sell causes like "the vote" to thousands of women (see Tickner). Anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists also turned to mass-publication strategies to create an alternative press and to reach new followers.

As Andreas Huyssen suggests, many early modernist writers and artists responded to aspects of this expanding commodity culture with antipathy (Huyssen, pt. 1). *The Egoist* (*E*) and its predecessors, *The Freewoman* (*FW*) and *New Freewoman* (*NFW*), would seem to exemplify the type of "coterie" publication that turned its back on mass audiences and published either for posterity or for what Ezra Pound would call the "party of intelligence" (*E* 2/1/17, 21).[3]

These little magazines were arenas for radical political and economic theories, the "egoistic" philosophy affirmed by Dora Marsden, and the early

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work of modernist authors like Pound, Richard Aldington, H. D., F. S. Flint, and T. S. Eliot—all of whom generally appear to affirm the high-culture side of Huyssen's "great divide."[4] But Huyssen's argument overlooks an important phase of early modernism, one that blurs the separation of modernists from avant-gardists by their stances toward mass culture.[5] I wish to explore the close, if brief, contact between modern commodity-advertising tactics and the modernists who in many ways most upheld a notion of high culture against mass-culture "contamination."

The counter-public spheres that I will discuss—those of suffragism and of anticapitalist and antistatist political movements—showed these modernists how to adapt mass-advertising tactics to further political and social, rather than explicitly economic, goals. I will argue that the writers and editors for *The Freewoman/New Freewoman/Egoist* were attracted to the proliferating types of publicity of an energetic advertising industry, and that they also attempted to adopt mass-advertising tactics—not directly from the commercial enterprises of the mass-market magazines, but rather via the suffrage and anarchist movements—in order to seek out large audiences within the prewar London masses. These attempts mark a surprising optimism among modernists about the possibility of forming broad-based counter-public spheres in opposition to bourgeois social norms, liberal and statist politics, and, above all for modernist authors, conventional literary taste. I will give an overview of developments in commercial advertising, and how those developments were deployed by suffragists and other political radicals in prewar London. These oppositional movements provided an institutional context for the little magazine that began as *The Freewoman*—a feminist paper—and ended as *The Egoist*—a primary vehicle for modernist authors. I will then discuss these authors' attempts to forge ties to oppositional movements and to market modernism via the institutions and material practices of commercial culture.

Avant guerre oppositional groups, like women's suffrage organizations and socialist, anarchist, and syndicalist political movements, were intricately related to mass-advertising and mass-publication techniques, which were enjoying unprecedented success. New mass-market newspapers like Harmsworth's *Daily Mail* (one of the first dailies to reach out to the working and lower-middle classes and specifically to women) and the cheap productions of Newnes and Pearson began to hit astronomical six- and even seven-figure sales through circulation-boosting stunts, sensational crime and sports reporting, and entertaining copy that required little concentration or education (Altick 363–64). As new print and graphic technologies dramatically

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increased the possibilities for ad design, these periodicals shifted their profit bases from subscription to advertising (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 98–101; Pound 79–80). Even with the cheaper raw materials and lower manufacturing costs of the late Victorian period, the Harmsworth and Newnes papers were sold for 1/2d, often less than they cost to produce, because the increased circulation brought in greater advertising revenues. By the end of the nineteenth century, print media in general had followed suit. Advertising became the largest generator of revenue, both for daily papers and for many magazines (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 59, 95). Early twentieth-century commodity advertising became more sophisticated in order to take advantage of expanding markets. Manufacturers of national brand name products launched enormous campaigns and gave increasingly active roles to advertising agencies in crafting them (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 121, 130–40). Perhaps most significantly, the ads themselves gradually evolved from focusing on the promised performance of the merchandise (the "product-oriented approach") to suggesting a lifestyle, or some attribute of the consumer, that the product would affirm: glamour, intelligence, well-being, and so forth—the "product symbols approach" (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 153–55).

Suffragettes proved adroit at adapting institutions and tactics of the commercial mass market to support a feminist counter-public sphere. The suffrage papers, often with large circulations of their own,[6] were voices in a vast counter-public sphere—a discursive space in which the vote and other women's issues were publicly deliberated outside of the institutions of the dominant public sphere. These periodicals advertised in each other's pages and announced public events of interest to all suffrage groups. In spite of their differences on certain issues, especially that of militancy, these organizations and their papers united around a single goal, the vote.

Suffrage organizations faced perpetual boycotting by distributors and had to find other means of distributing their propaganda papers and attracting new members. They circumvented boycotts by organizing their own distributing apparatuses and printing and publishing companies.[7] And they also turned to the highly visible advertising strategies of the commodity culture and mass-market periodicals.

First of all, they adopted cheap prices and eye-catching, circulation-boosting stunts. Like the Harmsworth publications, suffrage papers were designed for mass sale, priced generally at 1d weekly and printed on large-sized paper. The principal means of advertising them were bold intrusions into public space: the spectacles documented by Lisa Tickner, and such tactics as plastering train and tube stations and hoardings with catchy, colored posters that often hung alongside those advertising the *Daily Mail*.[8] But, as *Votes for Women* put it, "the most effectively shown poster of VOTES FOR

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WOMEN will . . . always remain the one that is seen at the street corner, hung from the shoulders of the VOTES FOR WOMEN papersellers!" (6/28/12, 637).

The sandwichman was a popular advertising medium for consumer products (Turner 79), and the sheer obtrusiveness of the sandwich board made it the preferred public advertisement for the suffrage magazines. Posters and leaflets were of great importance to both commercial product and suffrage advertisements, but the scandalously public physical presence of the middle-class woman was considered the most effective means of reaching the urban masses. Violet Hunt recalled her painful sacrifice for the cause, as she and May Sinclair were drafted to collect money and advertise the vote in their High Street:

> May and I flashed our boxes out. Much has been said of our heroism in 'standing outside to beg,' and I fancy she felt as I did—as if we had suddenly been stripped naked, with a cross-sensation of being drowned in a tank and gasping for breath. (51)

The public gaze made her feel exposed and violated, and the act of asking for money rubbed against her class sensibilities, but many middle-class suffragettes surrendered their bourgeois pride and privacy to advertise the cause. Sometimes public contestation—and even sandwich board wars—occurred between suffragettes and antisuffrage agitators.[9] While suffragette planners used anything eye catching, from wagons to elephants, to display posters for suffrage magazines and events, street selling was the preferred tactic. Perhaps most importantly to the modernists who would follow the suffrage papers' example, these kinds of mass-advertising techniques did in fact reach large audiences of women in London and around the country and helped raise enormous sums of money for the cause. *Votes for Women,* for instance, ran a successful £250,000 fund-raising drive. Names of newly recruited subscribers and contributors were published in the papers, increasing the sense of solidarity of masses of women "out there" involved in the institutions of this thriving counter-public sphere.

Suffrage magazines also benefited from another development in commodity advertising: the brand name. As new and cheaper consumer products emerged, and as the newspapers earned large revenues from advertising campaigns, the newspaper "brand name" demonstrated this interlocking of interests. One popular Harmsworth paper, *Answers,* began marketing *Answers* consumer products, like the *Answers* pen, watch, tea, coffee, cigarettes, and toothache cure (Ferris 48). Using the power of the brand name both to advertise a noncommercial product (the cause) and to raise money by selling commodities, many suffrage magazines featured their own brand

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name products. *Votes for Women* advertised *Votes for Women* cigarettes and tea, and even the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) Suffragette Crackers, while *The Common Cause* advertised a *Common Cause* Fountain Pen.

Yet another crucial connection between the commercial realm and the suffrages involved consumer blocks. Harmsworth early had perceived the value to advertisers of creating new popular journals aimed at particular audiences (Ferris 44–46, 80–87). Likewise, the suffrage journals—with their large middle-class female readerships—were a gold mine for advertising campaigns. A vast array of consumer items were advertised in the suffrage papers, from clothing, books, and patent medicines for "female" or childhood ailments, to national brand name items (Coleman's Mustard, Flako Soap, and the like). Above all, enormous revenues were generated for the suffrage cause by advertisements for London's major department stores. Debenham and Freebody, Peter Robinson's, and Selfridges occupied much of the advertising space in the prominent suffrage magazines, and, as Kaplan and Stowell document, the suffragettes greatly influenced the fashions marketed by these stores.[10]

Sensing their readership's value as a ready-made consumer block, these magazines promoted themselves to businesses. In a notice entitled "How to Make Money for the Cause," *The Suffragette* wrote:

> You may not be able to secure advertisements, but you can *keep* them by patronising the advertisers. Tell them—or better still, write on your bills—that your purchase is the outcome of advertising in the SUFFRAGETTE. . . . ALL of us can swell the revenue for the cause by purchasing from advertisers—and tell them WHY YOU PATRONISE THEM. (7/3/14, 206)

Similarly, *The Vote* carried the frequent reminder to "Support those advertisers who support us." It ran a notice proclaiming that "THE VOTE IS A GOOD ADVERTISING MEDIUM. We know that our readers support THE VOTE. If you are an Advertiser, we want YOU to know it too," and printed testimonials from satisfied advertisers (2/4/11). The suffrage cause had in itself become a product—an abstraction that lent itself well to the packaging of astute advertisers—but it also organized a buying public that appealed to advertisers of other commercial products. This symbiosis sold countless consumer items for department stores and swelled the coffers of the suffrage journals.

Out of this milieu, Dora Marsden and Mary Gawthorpe started *The Freewoman* in 1911. Advertisers saw the same market potential in *The Freewoman* as in the major suffrage papers. Debenham and Freebody's, for instance, pitched the latest styles in women's clothing to what they assumed

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was the female middle-class audience of the suffrage papers.[11] Ads for new national brand name products, like Horrocks's "flanalette" and Adori soap, appeared alongside ads for women's patent medicines.

And these commercial ads were accompanied by ads for the institutions of the feminist counter-public sphere. Not surprisingly, *The Freewoman* carried notices for the International Suffrage Shop, and for radical publishers like Stephen Swift, which ran a full-page ad at the back of every issue boasting of its banned books. Ads aimed at the new liberated woman, like those for Farrow's Bank for Women or "jujutsu" classes for women, ran alongside ads for literary magazines like *The Poetry Review* and *The Onlooker.* What is most significant about *The Freewoman*'s ads is that, in spite of its shaky beginning with only around 300 subscribers, *The Freewoman*—like the *Daily Mail*—actually made more money from advertising revenue than it did from subscriptions.[12] Seen as another suffrage paper despite Dora Marsden's harsh attacks on the WSPU, *The Freewoman* was carried by the International Suffrage Shop and bought by organizations like the WSPU, the Women's Freedom League, the International Women's Franchise Club, and the National American Suffrage Association of New York.

But, unlike most editors of the suffrage papers, Marsden had attempted to shift the discussion of feminism away from a myopic insistence on the vote as the sole issue, and she left behind the militancy of the WSPU. This move was costly, as the feminist/suffragette counter-public sphere tended to favor institutional legitimation. Without the backing of any particular organization, *The Freewoman's* survival seemed doubtful. But Marsden learned from the example of the suffrage papers and their modes of publicity. Like the suffragettes, Marsden turned to the new institutions of the commercial mass market to try to build the magazine's subscription base. In February 1912, in order to help promote the magazine, she engaged an advertising agent—an important new force in commodity advertising (see Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 129–30). The agent, Mr. H. Winterton, corresponded with Willing & Co. about placing *Freewoman* ads in tube stations around London. He advised *The Freewoman* staff on schemes to place notices in the "Co-operative Housekeeping or domestic papers," and offered suggestions to increase the paper's marketability as a product.[13]

The Freewoman, however, only partly belonged to the discursive space of the suffrage/feminist counter-public sphere. More importantly to modernist authors, it tried to create a broader oppositional forum that would allow not only public discussion of suffrage but also of topics that the bourgeois suffrage magazines would consider "improper," like homosexuality, radical monetary reforms, experimental or radical art and literature, and antistatist politics. *The Freewoman* published important syndicalists like Guy Bowman,

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Stirnerian egoists like Steven Byington, and anarchists like Guy Aldred and Benjamin Tucker.[14] The radical milieu to which *The Freewoman* belonged shared suffragism's sense that the commercial press should not hold a monopoly on mobilizing mass opinion. From 1890 to the beginning of the war, socialists and anarchists argued that the ballooning of the commercial press only increased the influence of the major political parties; like the suffragettes, they created their own periodicals and press organizations to contest the dominant public sphere's control of political discourse, and they tried to emulate the practices of commercial papers to attract mass audiences.[15]

Just as suffragettes had learned to exploit public space, radical political movements used public meetings and lectures, both as mass advertising and as institutions of a counter-public sphere. When W. H. Smith and Sons, that held a virtual monopoly on rail station bookstalls, boycotted the controversial *Freewoman, Guy* Aldred—editor and publisher of the anarchist *Herald of Revolt*—volunteered to help organize lectures and to keep a standing notice of *The Freewoman* in his paper,[16] and later suggested to Marsden that the lectures be used for fundraising. He offered to lecture gratis if he could sell his *Herald of Revolt* alongside *The Freewoman,* and to provide Marsden with people who would push the bills announcing the meeting. He wrote, "You see you have to make yourself felt against boycott; and public meeting is the only way of doing it." Using a term from the commercial entertainment industry, Aldred added, "Among Anarchists, Freethinkers, and Socialists my name will 'draw.'"[17]

Though *The Freewoman* was never widely read by the working classes,[18] it became an important link between the women's movement and antistatist sentiments, and thus suggested to modernist authors a vision of a broadly based counter-public sphere sustained by mass publicity.[19] Emphasizing its commitment to oppositional discourse, *The Freewoman* founded an important new forum of publicity: the Freewoman Discussion Circles. Radical political meetings, suffragists' "At Home" discussions, and public lectures only stimulated the hunger for public debate of controversial issues. As Marsden wrote in *The Freewoman,* Feb. 15, 1912:

> It has been pointed out to us by friendly critics that THE FREEWOMAN contains each week matter so highly debatable, and of such serious human import, that it is difficult to digest all that it contains, and to find one's bearings, in view of the many articles which express opposing points of view. It has been suggested, therefore, that FREEWOMAN clubs, or informal gatherings of men and women, should be started for discussions, of which the weekly FREEWOMAN would form the basis. Of this suggestion, coming

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> from several readers, we highly approve, and pass it on to other readers for their consideration. (244)

In the ensuing biweekly Freewoman Discussion Circles, the participants listened to a lecture, which usually would be published in the magazine, and then spent the rest of the evening in open discussion of the topic. The *Freewoman*'s 20-page weekly issue had become increasingly dominated by its correspondence section, which had grown to take up from 8 to 10 pages during particularly heated exchanges. This sense of a discursive space for a public interested in progressive or even revolutionary issues, created by the paper itself and the other journals with which it was in dialogue, was furthered by the open forum of the Discussion Circle.[20]

As the *Freewoman* tried to publicize a wide range of oppositional movements, its writers began to synthesize different revolutionary political discourses and ideas.[21] In a *Freewoman* leader entitled "The New Prostitution" (*FW*, 4/11/12, 402), C. H. Norman adopted suffragist rhetoric (like that in Christabel Pankhurst's *The Great Scourge and How to End It*) to charge the commercial press with spreading a "mental Syphilis" throughout the populace. As an antidote to the misrepresentations of the press, he upheld alternative forms of mass propaganda, and praised the recent miners' manifesto (probably referring to the antistatist pamphlet *The Miner's Next Step*). Still employing metaphors of social health and purity, Norman adopted the syndicalist call for a general strike to destroy the tyranny of the commercial press.[22]

> A society must be very healthy which will soon spew out this poison. . . . A general strike, in which the daily papers could not be published, would bring the whole edifice toppling round the ears of the Harmsworth-Levi-Cadbury-Pearson gang. . . . When it is come, and gone, there will be a good many unemployed journalists, and a purified England, as a result. (402)

The Freewoman, then, drew together a spectrum of oppositional stances from such politically distant sources as syndicalism and Christabel Pankhurst.

Although *The Freewoman* collapsed in October 1912, it had shown young modernist authors an alternative path to wide publication and given them a vision of a broadly based counter-public sphere sustained by mass publicity. Marsden's resurrection of her journal as *The New Freewoman* in June 1913 (which became *The Egoist* in January 1914) created an important vehicle for modernist and avant-garde literary activity. Through magazines like *The New Freewoman* (cf. *The New Age),* read by audiences interested in political and social radicalism, young British modernists—especially the imagists—experimented with stepping outside the dominant Edwardian literary institutions.

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But, because modernist authors' engagement with alternative publication networks also exposed them to the institutions and material practices of commercial culture, it forced to a crisis their understanding of the modern poet's connection to urban mass culture. These authors had a vexed relationship to what Huyssen characterizes as the "great divide." They conceived of their art as "high art" and vehemently attacked commercialized culture. When they addressed contemporary London, some of the English imagist poets publishing in *The Egoist* expressed a sense of alienation and animosity toward the urban masses, whom they figured as debased, unindividuated, and intrusively antagonistic. Yet I would argue that this animosity derived from modernists' sense of the success of the institutions of the mass market—a success that, in the field of advertising, would prove too attractive to ignore.

Modernist poets writing in *The Egoist* documented a range of stances towards commercial mass culture, from the ambivalent to the affirmative. In *The Egoist*'s May 1915 "Imagist Number," F. S. Flint published a poem entitled "Easter" (75). The speaker, walking through a park with an intimate friend, notices the "shabby" people on the other side of the wall. Shrinking from confrontation, he expresses the anxiety of identity loss:

> Is not the whole park made for them,
> and the bushes and plants and trees and grasses,
> have they not grown to their standard?
> The paths are worn to the grave, with their feet; . . . and you and I
> must strive to remain two
> and not to merge in the multitude.

The death of beauty ("the paths are worn to the grave"), lowering of standards, and loss of identity and of the special bond he has with his friend, these are the threats of the urban masses, even for Flint, a poet who, in his best mode, was more of a city poet than most of the other imagists.

The poem ends as the two escape between hedges:

> beyond is a pool flanked with sedge,
> and a swan among the water-lilies.
> But here too is a group
> of men and women and children;
> and the swan has forgotten its pride;
> and thrusts its white neck among them,
> and gobbles at nothing;
> then tires of the cheat and sails off;
> but its breast urges before it
> a sheet of sodden newspaper
> that, drifting away,

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reveals beneath the immaculate white splendour
of its neck and wings
a breast black with scum.

Friend, we are beaten.

What might simply be a poem in which lovers desire solitude away from the trivialized world ends with something much more hostile, even sinister. The swan, a stock poetic and artistic image for beauty, also stands for the poet himself in the French symbolist tradition that Flint authoritatively chronicled for British magazines.[23] Two of the most famous of these swan poems—Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" in *Les Fleurs du Mal* and Mallarmé's sonnet, "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui"—figure the poet as a swan attempting to escape sterility and degradation. "Le Cygne" was occasioned by Paris's "urban renewal" of 1852 (Hampton 446), and Baudelaire expresses his nostalgia for the old city in the futile escape of a swan from a menagerie:

. . . A swan who had escaped his cage, and walked
On the dry pavement with his webby feet,
And trailed his spotless plumage on the ground.
And near a waterless stream the piteous swan
Opened his beak, and bathing in the dust
His nervous wings, he cried (his heart the while
Filled with a vision of his own fair lake):
"Oh water, when then wilt thou come in rain?
Lightning, when wilt thou glitter? (109)

The poet's alienation in the new modern cityscape is mirrored by the swan's yearning for his "own fair lake." Echoing Baudelaire's "Le Cygne," Mallarmé's famous sonnet likewise features a swan trying to escape "his useless exile," frozen in the ice "when sterile winter's ennui has shone forth" (170–73).[24]

In "Easter," the swan attempts to eat the bread proffered to it by the masses, suggesting Flint's attempt to bring urban life into his aesthetic experience. But what most jarringly summarizes the degradation and contamination of beauty and of poets is the sodden newspaper that stains the swan's breast—not with its own blood, as in a tragic fairy tale, but rather with something that flows far more thinly: the cheap newsprint of the tabloid. Just as the masses are cheated of intellectual or aesthetic nourishment by the commercial culture symbolized by the newspaper, they cheat the swan and starve beauty. They both attract the poet and ultimately reject him. As Baudelaire's escaping swan figures the problematic status of the poet in the new city,

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and Mallarmé's the poet's attempt to fly above the icy sterility of everyday life, Flint's swan poem suggests that the modern poet cannot survive unstained by urban mass-market culture. There is a sense of inevitability to the ending of the poem. The modernist poet can turn away from the masses—the swan wearies of their game and swims off—but he cannot simply wish away or ignore the powerful commercial press and the changing culture of the city. Likewise, the lovers can escape through the hedge but cannot escape the degradation of beauty: They realize they are "beaten."

Flint—and Aldington in such *Egoist* poems as "Cinema Exit" (7/1/15, 113) and "In the Tube" (5/1/15, 74)—understood commercial mass culture to be not just inconsequentially banal and insipid but also active and powerful. And this power, when wielded by the advertising industry, could seduce. Some poets even affirmed the alluring vitality of modern advertising. A strange text by Allen Upward appeared at the end of the June 1, 1914, issue of *The Egoist* (220):

THE

Magic Carpet.

ALLEN UPWARD.

This painted poster
Has snatched me from Trafalgar Square.
To camels fording Asia streams,
Laden with woven dreams.
The soul of Persia dyes the wool:
The heart of the sad old Astronomer
Bleeds once again beneath the maiden's foot.

ENVOY:

———— & Sons.

There is more poetry in your advertisement
Than many numbers of our best Reviews.

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Upward, an important but largely forgotten figure in early British modernism who helped originate imagism and who influenced Pound's *Cantos*,[25] uses images from an advertising poster as the substance of a vaguely imagistic poem. However, as if overcome by the orientalism and exotic fantasy of the ad, he permits himself the very abstract excesses of symbolism or Coleridgean romanticism that the austere and ascetic doctrines of imagism intended to excise. Entranced by the vast array of new advertising images crowding the hoardings around Trafalgar Square, Upward adds his envoy: "_____ & Sons./ There is more poetry in your advertisement / Than many numbers of our best Reviews." Upward is much more sanguine than other imagists about the power and even aesthetics of advertising. Indeed, the manipulation and juxtaposition of images, and the move to replace discursive text with the evocative image in commodity advertising, do suggestively parallel some aspects of the emerging imagist poetic.

But this text is more than a work of "high art" influenced by advertising aesthetics. Its status is ambiguous. It seems to be an ad, perhaps for a new book by Upward. Like other ads, it is boxed off by lines of print and ends with that ubiquitous marker of the growing commodity culture: "All Rights Reserved." The poem/ad plays upon the audiences' need to categorize it as either poem or ad—in order, simultaneously, to be both. Upward, who frequently traveled internationally, wrote to Harold Monro, the editor of *Poetry and Drama*: "My personal circle is too miscellaneous to be called a group, and I know no way of reaching it but by advertising." He suggested that "a poetical and mysterious announcement in the *Morning Post* . . . (where the cabaret advertises) would bring interviewers to inquire."[26] Upward's text in the *Egoist* may well have been both poem and just such a "poetical and mysterious announcement" designed to catch the eye of followers and new readers alike. In his enthusiasm for the power of commodity advertising, Upward overtly destabilized the high/low opposition.

While most modernists publishing in *The New Freewoman/Egoist* were openly disdainful of homogenized commercial culture, they were, nevertheless, enthralled by the power of mass publicity, which offered new and effective ways of reaching large audiences. But their optimistic attempts to appropriate mass-advertising techniques were mediated by the suffragist and radical political roots of *The Freewoman*. Audiences for revolutionary movements seemed to have been "out there," and the anarchist and suffrage magazines provided clues as to how to reach them. The particular mass-publicity tactics employed by the editors of *The New Freewoman* and *Egoist* were precisely those successfully used by radical political and suffrage organizations and presses—not only advertising through the alternative network of publications and holding public meetings and lectures, but also borrow-

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ing such commodity advertising devices as sandwichmen, posters, fliers, advertising consultants, slogans, and the logic of the name brand.

The New Freewoman, like its predecessor, clearly positioned itself within the alternative institutions of the counter-public spheres. The public forum of the Discussion Circle was restarted, and ads and notices were placed in counter-public sphere magazines and papers, largely antiliberal and antibourgeois papers of many different types: the major suffrage journals, socialist weeklies and dailies, and even independent weeklies of the liberal intelligentsia, as well as literary magazines.[27] Despite the antisuffrage (because antiparliamentarian) and antisocialist (because anticollectivist) attacks frequently appearing in *The Freewoman* and now in *The New Freewoman/ Egoist,* many suffragettes and socialists still read the journal. Marsden had even tried to solicit the members of the Fabian Society to help restart *The Freewoman.*[28] Both the International Suffrage Shop and Henderson's Bookstore—"Specialists in Socialist Literature"—carried *The Freewoman* and now *The Egoist.*

The Egoist also adopted the mass-publicity techniques that these counter-public spheres had borrowed from the commercial press. In December 1913, Richard Aldington, who was becoming the new assistant editor of *The Egoist,* wrote to Dora Marsden:

> I propose that on Jan 1st and after we have two sandwichmen to advertise and sell the Egoist. We should print two bills. One containing in large letters the strange device: 'The Egoist, An Individualist Review, Price 6d.' The other with the same device in smaller letters and a list of the contents. These can be hung on the two men who will be given twenty copies of the N.F. and told to sell them if they can. They can return to Oakley house for more copies in the extremely unlikely event of their selling out. We will pay them so much per day and a percentage of what they sell. You can do the same thing in Southport if it would be any good.[29]

That the same poet who wished "happily rapid" disintegration on film-going crowds ("Cinema Exit") would propose this mass-advertising tactic might seem rather unusual. But I suggest that the example of sandwichboard-carrying suffragettes advertising their cause like a product—a tactic that helped to bring hundreds of thousands of women into contact with suffrage magazines—impressed Aldington as a viable use of mass publicity to attract attention to what he felt was an equally important revolution, a poetic one. His letter, while cautiously skeptical, was not a jest, and, beginning with the hiring of two "street men" for four weeks in May 1914, *The Egoist* continued to hire street sellers regularly all the way through 1918.[30]

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Like the suffragettes, but also like the Harmsworths and many commodity advertisers, *The New Freewoman/Egoist* utilized an important medium for publicity: circulars, fliers, and posters (see Nevett 70). They printed thousands of circulars about the new magazine (5,000 were initially printed up for *The New Freewoman,* but more were made later), and generally printed 50 to 100 posters (occasionally as many as 200) for each issue.[31] *The New Freewoman* made an ongoing call for anyone who could arrange to have a poster shown, and it listed names of agents who stocked the magazine in other cities. They even brought back their advertising agent to help promote the paper in January 1914, the first month it was published as *The Egoist.*[32]

The growing commodity culture also manifested itself in the magazine in other ways. As Winterton would doubtless have told them, the packaging of a commodity is all-important to its sale, and the name, *The New Freewoman,* soon seemed inappropriate both to Dora Marsden and to the male authors of a letter protesting it (Upward, Pound, Aldington, Huntly Carter, and Reginald Wright Kauffmann). This letter adopted Marsden's polemics against representational democracy and against suffrage journals' preoccupation with the vote: Its authors opined that "the present title of the paper causes it to be confounded with organs devoted solely to the advocates of an unimportant reform in an obsolete political institution" *(NFW* 12/15/13, 244). Marsden counseled changing the name to *The Egoist* and presented the situation in terms of commodity advertising:

> We offer a commodity for sale under a description which is not only calculated to attract a section of the public for which in itself it can have no attraction, but which would be an active deterrent to those who should compose its natural audience. (244)

This commodity, Marsden felt, was packaged incorrectly as a suffrage magazine.

Having repackaged the magazine as *The Egoist,* Marsden and her authors next attempted to convert imagism into a brand name for advertising. Of course, it is not news that Pound invented the tag "imagiste" to help H. D. publish her poems, and that the term helped to create a group identity that otherwise would hardly have existed. But it proved to be useful for the magazine as well. In April 1915, *The Egoist* ran a flashy advance announcement of its "Special Imagist Number" to appear the next month. The special May issue contained numerous imagist poems and articles about the imagist movement. The imagists themselves pushed the "brand name" concept, repeating catch phrases common in commodity advertising. The preface to *Some Imagist Poets* (1915), quoted in an *Egoist* review article, pro-

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claimed that imagism "has already become a household word" (*E* 5/1/15, 78). *The Egoist,* under Aldington as assistant editor, had bet on the advertising panache of "imagism," placing a huge "NOTICE" at the back of the special issue that "Future numbers of *The Egoist* will contain contributions from all the authors represented in this number" (83). As a one-time gamble for the "Special Imagist Number," Marsden and Weaver increased the magazine's print run by 500.

However, as *The Egoist* increasingly became a literary magazine, it began to slip out of the suffragist and anarchist counter-public spheres; suffragettes and other radicals saw aesthetics as less central to their concerns. *The Egoist*'s strength as a vehicle for commodity advertising thus waned, which sparked a crisis in its attempts to market itself. After the initial surge of interest in restarting *The Freewoman,* the subscription base dwindled, and the magazine lost any chance of bringing in significant advertising revenue. Not surprisingly, the early issues of *The New Freewoman* had attracted ads for books on syndicalism, anarchism, and feminism. By early 1914, other than a regular ad from London's Peasant Pottery Shop, a few ads for *Blast* and the Poetry Bookshop's chapbooks, and a growing list of the publications of the Egoist Press, the ads were all for the American magazines that shared *The Egoist*'s authors and many of its literary interests. To make matters worse for *The Egoist,* these American ads brought in no revenue; they were almost all exchanges.

In response to this, *The Egoist* tried to exploit a new commercial shift to expand its readership. Some *Egoist* ads combined the traditional content of magazine ads—the contents, contributors, and so forth—with catchy product-oriented phrases, like "Recognises no taboos" (in *Blast* 1: 160), or the ubiquitous subtitle "An Individualist Review." Most ads compared *The Egoist* to dominant magazine forms: "This journal is not a chatty literary review: its mission is not to divert and amuse" (*Little Review,* June 1918, inside cover), or "The Egoist has no point d'appui whatsoever with any other English journal. It is unique" (*The Drama,* May 1914, back pages). However, just as commodity advertising was moving from a "product-oriented" to a modern "product-symbols" approach, *The Egoist* also employed "product-symbol" persuasion. As an early ad in *Blast* claimed, *The Egoist* was "the only fortnightly in England that an intelligent man can read for three months running" (160). An ad in *The Drama* (May 1914) humorously proclaimed that "although THE EGOIST is intended for the intelligent, it is read by most of the well-known people in London." A later ad in *The Little Review* asserted: "*Obviously a journal of interest to virile readers only. Such should write, enclosing*

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subscription, to" followed by the address (June 1918). These ads attempted to lure the potential reader by affirming his or her own "intelligence," aligning the "virile" reader against the feminized mass culture described by Huyssen. But—complicating Huyssen's high/low and virility/femininity divides—this seemingly exclusionary tactic drew precisely on a convention of many commodity ads aimed at mass audiences. These ads used visual or textual images to suggest virility, well-being, and exclusivity, with which the buyer naturally identifies. The ad campaign for De Reszke cigarettes, "the Aristocrat of Cigarettes," for example, used slogans like "You can judge a man by the brand of cigarettes he smokes. And you can judge a brand of cigarettes by the men who smoke them." But at the heart of these ads were visual images, like that of a young, well-dressed man, surrounded by an adoring and beautiful wife in a low-cut dress, a faithful dog, and the comforts of the study *(Illustrated London News* 12/20/13, 4), or that of a man dancing with a fashionable woman who lights her cigarette against his in a sexually provocative pose *(ILN* 2/7/14, 4). One ad even featured the highly eroticized image of a young woman smoking, holding a box of cigarettes, saying, "Follow me," under the caption, "To you—an invitation" *(ILN* 317114, 4). These images suggested the virility of the potential smoker. Likewise, *The Egoist* ads tried to entice the subscriber to identify with a vision of an exclusive intelligent reading audience, too virile to be interested in the (feminine) "chatty literary review." These *Egoist* ads adopted mass-advertising tactics to appeal to a wide audience based on what might at face value be taken as an exclusionary tactic, even an arrogant contempt. New audiences "out there" were more educated and perhaps susceptible to this type of seduction.

So who were the audiences attracted by *The Egoist's* promotional tactics, the audiences for modernism in London before and during the war? *The New Freewoman/Egoist* reached an educated and largely middle-class readership.[33] Subscribers included male and female doctors, some clergymen, and even a few lawyers. Many of the women had college degrees (and, like Dora Marsden, advertised the fact).[34] But several of the commodity advertising tactics of the period that *The New Freewoman/The Egoist* and oppositional groups had emulated were aimed at the lower-middle and even the working classes. Notably, most of the urban readers of *The New Freewoman/Egoist* seem to have been of the lower-middle class or lower end of the solidly middle class.[35] Neither living in revolutionary bohemian poverty nor in aristocratic grandeur, the London readers of this avant-garde magazine tended to live in the maisonettes, terrace houses, or semidetached houses of the lower-middle classes, while some took advantage of the relatively inexpensive new suburban housing.[36]

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I suggest, therefore, that *The New Freewoman/Egoist* and the aesthetic revolution it promoted attracted a readership within a rising middle-class fraction, one that was highly educated but not endowed with the social prestige and financial capital of the established middle and upper-middle classes. As Bourdieu proposes, aesthetic tastes "are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space and, consequently, bound up with the systems of dispositions (habitué) characteristic of the different classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu 6). This fraction, however, was much smaller than the large numbers of workers interested in socialism or trade union movements, or of women supporting suffragism, and this presented a problem to *The Egoist*. The gender of the readership changed markedly, and this affected the magazine's ability to attract advertising revenue. Unmarried women living in London were the single largest group of readers of *The Freewoman,* with married women following closely. Men were outnumbered almost four to one.[37] Of the English subscribers to *The New Freewoman* in 1913, unmarried women were still the largest group, though men now accounted for more than a third of the subscribers. However, most of the initial readers of *The New Freewoman* never renewed their subscriptions. Furthermore, many of the female readers dropped quickly out of the list, so that female subscribers maintained only a slight majority until the paper's demise (though given the masculinist strain of many of the major writers for *The Egoist*—Pound, Lewis, Aldington, Eliot, and others—it is significant that more than half of a modernist little magazine's subscribers would be women). As editors of the major suffrage magazines knew, a middle-class female readership brought in large advertising revenues from department stores. The farther the *Egoist* moved from such a readership, the more impossible it became to secure such advertisers.

The Egoist's failure, I believe, speaks to the fragile nature of oppositional public spheres. I do not wish to propagate the illusion that there was a united front joining all these disparate movements in a single oppositional public sphere. Many suffragettes were staunchly and even conservatively middle class and procapitalist. Fabians were prostatist, as opposed to Guy Bowman's Syndicalists, and even within anarchist and "egoist" camps, there were widespread disagreements (which frequently littered the pages of *The Freewoman* and *New Freewoman* correspondence sections). Not only was there no united opposition to the Liberal and Conservative hegemony, but, as successful and widely circulated as many of the periodicals of the groups I have just mentioned were, *The Egoist* ultimately was unable to achieve much of a position within any oppositional movement. The war, of course, brought rationing of paper and increased printing costs,[38] as well as the general abeyance of oppositional movements. However, even before the war stifled most

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nonestablishment literary activity, *The Egoist* was in trouble. It attempted to graft revolutionary aesthetics onto revolutionary philosophical and political practices, but the magazine began to founder when it lost the audiences that *The Freewoman* had reached.

The Freewoman's attacks on the WSPU and on the single-minded pursuit of the vote had lost it suffragette readers early (see Garner). But ultimately two main issues seem to have hurt *The New Freewoman* and *The Egoist*. The first was Dora Marsden's attack on causes. As she wrote in her editor's column: "*The New Freewoman* has *no* Cause. . . . The nearest approach to a Cause it desires to attain is to destroy Causes" (*NFW* 7/1/13, 3–5). While many of the articles and published letters to *The New Freewoman* dealt with the relationship between individualism and movements or social collectivity, Dora Marsden's polemic focused on abstractions: the Vote, Duty, Liberty, Anarchism. For her, all abstractions were empty in the face of her individualist will to freedom of thought and action. Her position alienated many of the oppositional readers who had supported the resurrection of *The Freewoman* in the first place. *The New Freewoman* seemed to drift into incoherence, and finally, even staunchly supportive anarchists like Benjamin Tucker ceased contributing to the magazine (see Parker). Tucker clashed with Marsden over issues of collectivity and causes, and he finally wrote:

> I will venture to express my surprise at hearing that THE NEW FREEWOMAN 'stands for nothing.' May I ask for an explanation of the subtitle: 'An Individualist Review'? And what did Miss Marsden mean when she said that the paper was 'not for the advancement of woman, but for the empowering of individuals'? My interest in the paper grows out of my belief that it 'stands for' such empowering. . . . If I am wrong; if, in truth, THE NEW FREEWOMAN is not, or is not longer, a co-ordinate effort toward a definite end, but has become, instead, a mere dumping-ground for miscellaneous wits,—then, even though the dumping be effected through an editorial sieve of a mesh most rare and fine, my interest will diminish materially and speedily. (*NFW* 12/15/13, 254–55)

In the end, Tucker did indeed give up his *New Freewoman* column, and, during the 1914 volume, many of the initial feminist and anarchist readers and contributors abandoned the magazine as well.

As I suggested earlier, abstractions (like "votes for women") were marketable products. They sold commodities, they were easily advertised with all the new tactics of packaging commercial products, and they united many disparate groups of readers and buyers. While a single political cause might not keep a paper alive, the *lack* of any such easily identifiable cause meant not only a loss of readers but also the ensuing loss of advertising revenues

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that came with higher circulation and a defined readership. *The Egoist*'s hope to avoid aligning itself with any particular group or cause, yet still maintain a readership of general opposition at many levels, proved to be illusory.

What Marsden argued for was something closely resembling the old Arnoldian liberal ideal of the public sphere as an open debate, a free play of ideas, what she called "The sense of vitality generated by mind reacting on mind."[39] Marsden maintained that the magazine was

> the flexible frame waiting to be filled with the expression of the constantly shifting tale of the contributors' emotions. It has no 'Cause.' . . . Should an influence come in to make it rigid, as happens in all other papers, it would drop from our hands immediately. (*NFW* 7/1/13, 25)

The lively correspondence section, and the Discussion Circle it inspired, were a testament that, around a specific set of issues, this openness was indeed the strongest aspect of *The Freewoman*. However, her denial of "causes" ultimately seemed to reject both the collective action that most oppositional groups saw as necessary for political change and any editorial direction or coherence that might have retained readers interested in anarchism or feminism, for instance.

The second issue was crucial to the struggles of literary modernism to find an audience. As I've suggested, *The Egoist* was plagued by the growing perception, as literary activity came to take up more and more of the magazine in 1914, that the literary side was irrelevant to the political and social interests. Byington, for instance, argued that

> the paper is divided between two interests. The greater part of it is occupied with certain movements in belles-lettres and art, the smaller part with the Marsdenian treatment of ethics. Whatever parallelism there may be between the impulses that these two parts represent, the connection is not so close as to establish any very strong presumption that one who is especially interested in the one will be especially interested in the other. (*E* 2/1/15, 31)

Byington's reaction, like those of many other readers of *The Freewoman* and *The New Freewoman,* presented a quandary for modernist writers. The poems and stories in suffragette, anarchist, and socialist magazines for the most part were didactic propaganda pieces or polemical diatribes. Revolutions in poetics and fictional form could not sustain the interest that a social or political movement could. The attempt to marry imagism and other modernist literary movements to the nonliterary articles in the magazine (in spite of the productive interchange of ideas between these two sets of contributors) was a failure.

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Marsden herself felt a problematic lack of unity in the paper. In October 1915, she wrote to Harriet Shaw Weaver, now the editor of *The Egoist,* about the sagging subscription base: "What is the matter with the paper is that it has no unity; it is not vitalised or dominated by any united purpose which can be made to grow increasingly attractive and intelligible to the readers." She argued that

> It is not bright because it has no leaven: what should be the yeast to lighten the heaviness of Egoism is the equally unleavened heaviness of Imagism. There are two purposes running through the small space of a 16p. monthly. Neither helps the other: both militate against each other because neither takes on the part of light counterfire with the other. The paper is trying to serve two masters, and while one master—one purpose—is absolutely essential: two make a deadening combination.[40]

She suggested to Weaver that either imagism must go or egoism. If imagism were kept, Aldington would be able to use the paper to see if there was any enduring merit to the imagist poets, and money might be found from such sources as Amy Lowell. Or, she advocated, imagism should be dropped from the paper in favor of egoism. She suggested

> Pulling up sharp while we have a nucleus of circulation left; and so draw the attention of the readers to the fact that matters are going to be changed. This course would save money on three issues which saved sum could be used in advertising and reappearance.

She would also become a dramatic critic and try to bring the now-important Rebecca West back into the paper, as well as Storm Jameson and perhaps even Harold Monro. Ultimately, however, Marsden and Weaver left the paper as it was, with Aldington publishing imagism, Weaver bringing in fiction from Lewis and Joyce, and Marsden writing leaders. *The Egoist's* literary course was set, and by 1918 there were only 90 subscribers left on the lists. While many important young writers subscribed during this late period,[41] the paper was running up increasing debts, and its reduced print run of 400 amply met the small demand for it.[42] Representing neither the interests of liberalism and capital, nor the causes of suffragism or anticapitalist political movements, it could not reach the large audiences it had desired.

By the final year of the war, the failure of *The Egoist* to achieve a viable position within a counter-public sphere brought Marsden, Weaver, and editors of other little magazines in the same position to turn again to the commodity realm—this time not to advertising but rather to contemporary innovations in corporate capital. The slow prewar economy had led to a

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"merger mania" in the corporate world, with at least 67 firms disappearing each year in mergers between 1888 and 1914 (Hannah). Combines formed at an even greater pace during the war to meet greater production needs in crucial military sectors, and the process accelerated even more as the war came to an end and firms diversified in preparation for a peacetime economy (Hannah 30). In an economic climate of corporate amalgamation, editors of modernist little magazines considered schemes to consolidate several modernist enterprises that had previously been rivals into a large multimedia concern that, like the new corporate combines, would enjoy the benefits of diversification (across different media and different aesthetics, and hence of wider audiences) and of capital consolidation. From the inception of *The New Freewoman,* Pound had frequently come before Marsden and Weaver with promises of money and subscribers in return for a portion of the magazine, and, at the beginning of 1918, even Eliot had gotten involved in such attempts.[43] However, Marsden herself soon suggested a scheme involving several modernist institutions that represented a last-ditch effort to produce a viable avant-garde environment in London.

Marsden's plan grew out of a proposal by Herbert Read to join together *The Egoist* and Frank Rutter's *Art and Letters,* and the new Adelphi Gallery, which had become the home of the unjuried Allied Artists Association shows.[44] Read and Rutter added a bookshop to the gallery to sell *Art and Letters* publications, including Read's poetry, and wished to expand their publishing business into a "great independent Author's Press," or "Allied Authors Association" as Rutter wished to call it (Read 141–42). Pound sent Read to talk to Weaver and Marsden about their publishing business, the Egoist Press (Read 142), and what resulted was Marsden's suggestion to combine all of the various offers of amalgamation into a single modernist institution.

The Adelphi Gallery with its AAA exhibitions would continue its policy of exhibiting the work of young and promising artists for sale at affordable prices, and a bookstore run along the lines of Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop connected to the gallery would sell magazines and books by the Egoist Press. In addition, the Egoist Ltd. would reduce costs by buying its own printing press and would publish, under the title *The Egoist Combined Monthly Publications,* an amalgamation of all the little magazines that had been approaching *The Egoist.* This would bring together *Art and Letters* (with Read, Rutter, and the Sitwells, who promised they could bring at least 200 subscribers),[45] *Blast* and Wyndham Lewis's followers,[46] and *The Little Review* (namely, Ezra Pound's interests and connections). Marsden wanted to give each previously competing faction a 32-page section that, when combined with *The Egoist's* 32 pages, would produce a 128-page monthly magazine for

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2/6. This "innovation in journalistic publishing," as she called it,[47] would be priced like the established Edwardian monthlies. With a respectable appearance, like the *Hibbert Journal*, and perhaps even cover art by Wyndham Lewis, and with the combined subscription bases of all the competing little magazines, Marsden imagined that it might be viable.[48] Like mergers in the corporate world, she felt that this scheme would "pool our demands in support of a limited educated audience and at the same time share the costs of production and yet result in a creation which would carry an impressive appearance," and it would eliminate the friction between little magazines which inevitably resulted "because the competition for the small clientele is so fierce."[49]

Gone was the faith in political and social counter-public spheres and in finding a large audience for any single "advanced" magazine through advertising tactics. Replacing it was an understanding of the truly limited size of audiences for little magazines, and, in an almost total reversal of her 1915 scheme to oust imagism from the journal, a complete reliance on the literary and artistic avant-garde to create an audience for her philosophy. Marsden hoped that this combination of all the literary and artistic activity of the young modernists would generate interest by joining so many different institutions and readerships. She also hoped that the journal would conform more closely to Edwardian readers' horizons of expectation for a literary monthly, and thus would enter the dominant literary public sphere that was institutionalized in the prominent monthlies without having to compromise its contents with their more mainstream aesthetics.[50]

The scheme, unfortunately, came to naught, as each side backed out of it. *Blast* was never restarted; *The Egoist* folded at the end of 1919 to allow the Egoist Press to concentrate on book publication; *Art and Letters* folded at the end of 1920; and even the *New Age*, which *The Egoist* had long viewed as its British rival, ceased in 1923. The Sitwells' *Wheels* only ran from 1916 to 1921. Harold Monro never restarted *Poetry and Drama*, and his *Chapbook* struggled along only through the mid-1920s. By and large, the flurry of avant-garde little magazines and activity was not successfully reenergized in London after the war.

The counter-public sphere that had been created by the combination of social, political, and literary radicals in the prewar years, and by such magazines as *The Freewoman* and *The Egoist,* had evaporated during the war, and modernist art and literature moved more decisively into a separate aesthetic sphere. The attempt to bring modernist literature to public view by adopting the advertising tactics and public institutions of feminist and anarchist groups had given way to this last, guardedly optimistic attempt to enter the dominant literary public sphere by following trends in corporate

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capital and combining literary and artistic groups. While the press and organizations of counter-public spheres had been able to appropriate the advertising tactics of Edwardian commodity culture for their own noncommercial ends and had reached large audiences, experimental literature had not been able to follow this route successfully. While the London avant-garde never moved in the radical directions that groups which Peter Burger or Andreas Huyssen identify as avant-garde had pursued, the political, social, and aesthetic turmoil of the Edwardian era produced some fascinating if failed experiments and alliances between modernism, counter-public spheres, and the commodity culture that helped to sustain them.

NOTES

[1] Nevett notes that rising working-class and middle-class incomes helped encourage advertising as a way of reaching a new buying public (70), and Turner credits Newnes, Pearson, and Northcliffe (the most successful mass-market publishers of the period) with "widening the reading public, and hence the buying public" (143), as they quickly "extend[ed] their sway over the new Board School generation . . ." (150). See Keating on the huge upsurge in fiction publication in periodicals during this period. See also Altick for the development of mass-reading audiences in the later Victorian period and the unprecedented proliferation of books (317). By the end of the century, an increase in working-class expendable income and the reduction of the workweek created millions of new working-class consumers (Altick 365).

[2] I borrow the term "feminist counter-public sphere," which I will use throughout the chapter, from Rita Felski (ch. 5, "Politics, Aesthetics, and the Feminist Public Sphere"). Felski notes that "the category of a feminist counter-public sphere provides a useful means to theorizing the existence of an oppositional discursive space within contemporary society grounded in gender politics, making it possible to examine the mechanisms by which this collectivity is constituted, its political implications and effects, as well as its potential limitations" (155). Like the later phases in feminist movements in the West that Felski analyzes, the suffrage movement created its own institutions of publicity—papers, meetings, bookshops, publishers, street selling, and parades. See also Negt and Kluge.

[3] An early and influential assessment of the deliberate anticommercial and anti-audience nature of little magazines can be found in the introduction to what is still the best general guide to the little magazines of both England and America: Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich.

[4] Dora Marsden and Harriet Shaw Weaver edited these magazines that published Joyce's *Portrait* and much of *Ulysses,* Lewis's *Tarr,* and much imagist poetry. They drew to them such assistant editors as Rebecca West, Ezra Pound (unofficially), Richard Aldington, H. D., and T. S. Eliot. See Garner, and Lidderdale and Nicholson.

[5] See Huyssen, ch. 1, "The Hidden Dialectic: Avant-Garde—Technology—Mass Culture." Huyssen's attempt to distinguish avant-gardism from modernism

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according to their stances toward the "great divide" supplements Peter Burger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* which theorizes avant-gardism as an attack on the bourgeois institution of art. Both elucidate such avant-garde activity as Dada, Russian constructivism and futurism, German expressionism, the proletcult immediately following the Russian Revolution, and French surrealism. However, neither understanding of avant-gardism adequately distinguishes between modernism and avant-gardism in pre-WWI London. Imagism might be seen as a modernist "movement," and, though the short-lived vorticism was inspired (both positively and negatively) by Italian futurism, and certainly seems to embody the multimedia group activity and manifesto-driven energy of an avant-garde movement, it does not convincingly meet either Burger or Huyssen's criteria for avant-gardism. *The Egoist* supported and published both of these phenomena. I view vorticism as a true avant-garde movement, and the political and social connections woven into the tapestry of aesthetic revolt in the *Freewoman/New Freewoman/ Egoist* suggest avant-gardism as a multifaceted push for change at all cultural and political levels. The almost utopian desires of these writers and editors to reach wide audiences in the London masses and to have a great cultural impact suggests an optimistic enthusiasm about becoming the art or philosophy of the future that, along with Renato Poggioli, seems to me a characteristic of avant-gardism.

[6] Lyon notes that *Votes for Women* and many other suffrage papers had circulations of over 20,000 (102).

[7] For instance, the Minerva Publishing Company or the Feminist Publishers.

[8] Under the headline "Posters Everywhere! Painting the Town Purple, White, and Green," *Votes for Women* (6/28/12) lists the large number of tube stations in London with *Votes for Women* posters up. See also Ferris 81.

[9] *The Vote* described an event at the Great Woman's Suffrage Procession:

> Lord Cromer's Anti-Suffrage Society had sent out a contingent of sandwich-men, who, it was intended, should carry boards proclaiming, in huge red letters, on a white ground, 'Women Do Not Want the Vote.' A few of the men who had the temerity to put up the challenge and endeavour to carry it were so chaffed and badgered and hustled and laughed at that they were forced to lower the boards, tuck them under their arms, and slink along in somewhat sheepish fashion on the outskirts of the crowd, their painful and humiliating retreat being followed by such sarcastic expressions on the part of suffrage sympathisers as 'Where's the Antis to-day?' 'Why don't Lord Cromer carry 'is own boards?' and 'That's right, Tommy, glad to see yer'e chucked it.' (6/24/11, 111)

[10] Kaplan and Stowell note: "By virtue of their organized buying power, suffrage feminists clearly influenced the look of goods sold, as manufacturers and retailers fought for a large and lucrative market." (173). The department stores considered the suffragettes such a lucrative market that, when the WSPU's window-smashing campaign vandalized most of these regular advertisers, the stores continued to pour advertising money into suffrage coffers, including that of the proscribed *Suffragette* (174).

[11] Chic drawings of women in the latest fashions advertised clothing that would have been prohibitively expensive for the working class: A new spring tai-

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lored suit cost £4, and "Dainty Paris Blouses" went for 25/–, more than half a month's rent for most working-class families.

[12] Expenditures and Credits for *The Freewoman,* n.d., box 3, folder 12, Dora Marsden Collection, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries (hereafter listed as "Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton").

[13] Willing and Co., letter to Mr. H. Winterton, The Gough Press Agency, Feb. 16, 1912; and H. Winterton, letters to Grace Jardine, Apr. 16, 1912, and n.d. follow-up, all in the Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 3, folder 10.

[14] Bowman was the editor of *The Syndicalist* and a frequent contributor to *The Freewoman.* Byington was the translator of the English edition of Stirner's *The Ego and His Own.*

[15] Some individuals launched journals like *The Clarion* (a socialist cycling magazine that had 60,000 subscribers in England), and groups like the Independent Labour Party created 68 papers from 1893 to 1910. At least 25 anarchist papers appeared between 1890 and 1910 (Hopkin 295–97). Due to printers' fear of prosecution for sedition, the Metropolitan Co-operative Printing Works was formed to print all the major anarchist papers (Hopkin 301).

[16] Guy Aldred, letter to Grace Jardine, Jan. 23, 1912, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 2, folder 25.

[17] Guy Aldred, letter to Dora Marsden, Sep. 2, 1912, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 2, folder 25.

[18] Aldred writes: "of *course,* I could handle and circulate your paper, only the price [3d weekly] is prohibitive so far as the circles are concerned in which my influence lies." Letter to Grace Jardine, Jan. 23, 1912, Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 2, folder 25.

[19] Articles on anarchism and syndicalism were regularly published in *The Freewoman,* and women's issues discussed in *The Freewoman* worked their way into the anarchist and syndicalist magazines like the *Herald of Revolt* and the *Syndicalist,* with which *The Freewoman* exchanged subscriptions. Guy Bowman proposed the exchange in a letter of Feb. 23, 1912, in which he also asked Marsden, "Could you recommend a lady who would be willing to contribute to 'The Syndicalist' from the Syndicalist point of view" (Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 2, folder 27). In addition to sharing writers, like Aldred himself and the anarchist Selwyn Weston, the *Herald of Revolt* and *The Freewoman* also shared some subscribers, perhaps indicating the success of Aldred's efforts on behalf of *The Freewoman.*

[20] The first Discussion Circle meeting was on Apr. 25, 1912, and was attended by 100 people, setting a precedent for an active ongoing public institution. The Circles explored a wide range of topics including anarchism, homosexuality, eugenics, neo-Malthusianism, and many topics of current feminist concern: divorce, prostitution, domestic drudgery, and the like (Garner 734).

[21] Many intricate relationships of influence can be traced among these groups and the ideas they advocated. For a good discussion of suffragism and avant-gardism, see Lyon. Recent explorations of the influence of Marsden's antistatist politics on modernism include: von Hallberg, Barash, Kadlec, and Clarke. (Clarke has just published the first full-length study of Marsden's influence on literature, *Dora Marsden and Early Modernism: Gender, Individualism, Science.*)

[22] In London in 1910, three companies—Northcliffe, Cadbury, and Pearson—

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controlled over a third of the morning paper circulation and four-fifths of the evening circulation. Four companies—J. H. Dalziel, Riddell, Lloyd, and Northcliffe—controlled over four-fifths of the Sunday circulation (Lee 127).

[23] My thanks to Robert von Hallberg for suggesting this French context for the swan motif. Flint wrote numerous articles about French poetry for literary magazines, and was the author of the influential "French Chronicle" in *Poetry and Drama* (1913–14). See Grant 47–48.

[24] Hampton links the poem to Baudelaire's, and notes the self-referentiality of the poem (448). Cohn follows the critical commonplace of reading the swan as figuring "the poet who is held in the dull here-on-earth but aspires to a Platonic perfection of beauty" (124).

[25] Upward's *The Sayings of K'Ung the Master* (1904) and *Scented Leaves from a Chinese Jar* appeared in The *New Freewoman* in 1913. Pound was interested in these short, concise, proselike poems, and published some of them in *Des Imagistes* (1914). For more on Upward, see Sheldon and Knox. The best discussion of Upward's relationship to Pound's *Cantos* is Davie.

[26] Allen Upward, letter to Harold Monro, Dec. 27, 1913, Harold Monro Papers, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

[27] Rebecca West suggested advertising in *The Citizen, Daily Herald, New Age, Daily News,* and *Clarion* (Rebecca West, letter to Marsden, n.d. [Spring 1913], Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 1, folder 26), and for good measure sent notices to some more mainstream venues as well: the *Times, Chronicle, Athenaeum, Manchester Guardian,* and *Evening News* (see letters from West to Marsden in June 1913, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 1, folder 26). In addition to these, the directors decided to send announcements and advertisements to the *English Review, Occult Review, New Witness, New Statesman, Nation, Common Cause, Suffragette, Vote, Poetry Review, Votes for Women* (see the minutes to the Director's Meetings for Sep. 10, 1913, and May 14, 1914, in the Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library).

[28] Edward R. Pease, secretary of the Fabian Society, letter to Dora Marsden, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 3, folder 6. The Fabian Society declined to give her the list, but offered to let her pay them to send out her circular with the *Fabian News* for 21/– for 4,000.

[29] Richard Aldington, letter to Dora Marsden, Dec. 1913, on *New Freewoman* letterhead, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 1, folder 12.

[30] See the Account Book for the *New Freewoman* and the *Egoist* in the Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library, for the regular payments to street sellers.

[31] Account Book for the *New Freewoman/Egoist* in the Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[32] The Account Book lists weekly payments to Winterton from Jan. 12 through Mar. 2, 1914 (Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library).

[33] The subscription list for the *Freewoman* is in the Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 3, folder 12; the subscription lists for the *New Freewoman* and *Egoist,* as well as the lists of initial New Freewoman Ltd. shareholders and Thousand Club Members, are in the Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[34] College-educated women were increasingly common during this period, and were important to the suffrage movement; Christabel Pankhurst even had a law degree. Dora Marsden and many of her friends who supported the maga-

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zine, as well as some of the readers involved in positions of leadership in suffrage organizations (like Edith How Martyn in the Women's Freedom League), had college degrees.

[35] Even with a subscription list in hand (a rare find in the scantily preserved archives of little magazines), finding hard evidence about the economic class of Edwardian readers is a difficult endeavor. While the liberal budget of 1909–1910 instituted a progressive income tax, its records have not been preserved. However, the Finance Act of 1910 led to a valuation of all the properties in Great Britain. Many of these property valuations carried out by the Board of Inland Revenue survive in the Public Record Office at Kew.

In order to gauge the economic class of the type of reader who was attracted to the advertising tactics *The New Freewoman/Egoist* directed at the London masses, I searched for the rent and property valuations for addresses in London or the near suburbs. Admitting the unscientific nature of this research (due to incomplete records), some important generalizations can still be drawn. A large portion of *The New Freewoman* Thousand Club Members, shareholders, and subscribers in the London area lived in the terrace houses, maisonettes, and less-spacious or modernized houses of the lower-middle classes. Almost none of them owned the house in which they lived, and the rents for these dwellings at the time of their assessment (between 1910 and 1915) ranged from £26 up to £150, but most fell in the £35 to £60 range. After all the readers who had wanted a revival of *The Freewoman* had dropped away by roughly 1916, *The Egoist* subscribers tended to live in similar or slightly nicer dwellings—more in rented houses in the £50 to £70 range approaching the solidly middle class, but only a few actually owned their houses. Some, like Ezra Pound, lived in rooms that could be rented by the week, like working-class dwellings.

While these houses and apartments were generally in the upscale neighborhoods of the W, SW, and NW regions, including Kensington, Chelsea, and Holland Park (very few were in the E districts), they were not the houses of the upper classes. For the sake of contrast, a typical house on Grosvenor Square rented for £1,650 a year. On the other end of the scale of typical London rents, the working classes in the inner areas of London tended to pay weekly rents equivalent to around £26 per year, and in the middle ring (areas like Hampstead where many *New Freewoman* and *Egoist* subscribers lived) they dwelt in slightly larger apartments averaging around £34 per year. (See *Cost of Living* report xxii.)

So, the lower end of the rents in these subscription lists approximates the upper end of working-class rents, though the higher ends of the scale far exceeded them. Between 1911 and 1913, Dora Marsden's salary of £52 a year was less than half that of most male civil servants, and even by 1906 standards, it would have ranked far below such professions as semiskilled pottery workers, railway firemen, bus and tram drivers in London, shop assistants, and London postmen, coming only slightly above the always underpaid agricultural laborers (who made around £48 a year). So, while some *New Freewoman* shareholders and Thousand Club members were quite comfortable financially, few were wealthy. But they had the means for leisure time interests beyond the cheap entertainments of the working classes, and the education to cultivate literary interests.

[36] J. B. Priestly notes that the lower-middle classes, a large, mostly urban sector of the Edwardian population (including such professions as shopkeep-

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ers, office workers, superior factory foremen, teachers, craftsmen, less-successful professional men, and commercial traders) tended to earn between £150 and £500 a year, and lived in terrace houses, or even in new semidetached small villas (105). The Edwardian period witnessed a boom of suburban expansion before 1914. The wealthier professional and business classes tended to move from the squalor of the city to the outer suburbs, while the lower-middle classes and higher-paid workmen moved to the inner suburbs (Stevenson 24). Some *New Freewoman* subscribers lived in homes in these less-expensive northwestern suburbs like Hampstead Garden Suburbs, Golder's Green, or Hendon.

[37] Subscribers were scattered throughout the British Isles, but large numbers of married women, unmarried women, and male subscribers lived in London. There were 116 unmarried women, 103 married women, and 63 men on the *Freewoman* subscription list.

[38] Printing costs increased dramatically beginning in late 1916, and the page length of *The Egoist* gradually decreased to 14 pages, while the price increased to 9d by 1919. The government responded to the paper shortage during the war by passing a Paper Restriction Order (Nevett 140).

[39] Dora Marsden, letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Oct. 1915, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library. The magazine had been known since the *Freewoman* days by its readers as an "open paper," by which one reader meant "the fairness you show by publishing all sides of a question" (Jas. Hindshaw, letter to Marsden, July 1, 1912, Dora Marsden Collection, Princeton, box 3, folder 2.

[40] Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, Oct. 1915, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[41] Subscribers included William Carlos Williams, May Sinclair, Storm Jameson, Herbert Read, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, and Alice Corbin Henderson.

[42] The first run of 2,000 was never again attempted. It immediately dropped to 1,500 and then to 1,000 by September 1913. In February 1915, this dropped to 750 copies (except for the 1,250 copies of the May 1 Imagist issue and a 1,000 copy issue of March 1, 1916). The run dropped again, to 600 for April 1916, to 500 for January 1917, and to 400 copies for the September 1918 issue until its demise at the end of 1919. (See the Account Book, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.)

[43] Dora Marsden, letters to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Jan. 5, 1918, and Jan. 22, 1918, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library. Eliot brought a proposal from a Mr. Hutchins. Marsden, as with Pound's earlier proposals, was leery of giving anyone autonomy with part of the paper, and was skeptical that Hutchins would come through with either money or subscribers. The money never materialized.

[44] For a history of the founding in 1908 and progress of the AAA, see Rutter 180–99. For the Adelphi scheme, see Read 106.

[45] Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, n.d. [late Dec. 1918], Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[46] Lewis eventually tried to restart *Blast* after the war with the Egoist Press, but could never scrape together the money even to pay off his printing bills from its first two issues. Marsden noted: "While Mr. Lewis' friends might not subscribe to the Egoist they would probably subscribe to an amalgamated one of this sort." (Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, Nov. 21, 1918, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.)

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[47] Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, Nov. 21, 1918, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[48] Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, n.d. [late Dec. 1918], Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[49] Dora Marsden, letter to Weaver, Nov. 21, 1918, Harriet Shaw Weaver Papers, British Library.

[50] The dominant literary and intellectual public sphere of the Edwardian establishment was institutionalized in prominent weeklies like the *Spectator* or the *Saturday Review;* monthly reviews like the *Fortnightly, National,* and *Contemporary;* and in prestigious papers like the *Times.* These venues, as well as purely literary monthlies like the *Cornhill,* were arenas for the publication and public discussion of "high" literature, and were agents of the consecration of the tastes of the educated bourgeoisie.

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Science for Feminists: Margaret Atwood's Body of Knowledge

June Deery

Many powerful ideas of modern science have fallen on artistic deaf ears. Except for writers of science fiction, relatively few contemporary fiction writers have made natural science a central preoccupation. In fact, most authors ignore scientific developments altogether. An interesting exception is Margaret Atwood, who not only refers to science but also does so from a woman's perspective, something comparatively rare in literary evocations of science. Science is not Atwood's central concern, but she does suggest, albeit in a light and at times even whimsical fashion, that modern physics is suited to describing women's experiences. In so doing she produces a striking adaptation of a predominantly male discourse (natural science).

Despite an obvious display of science in her popular novel *Cat's Eye*, there has been little examination of this aspect of Atwood's work, with the exception of an admirable chapter in Susan Strehle's *Fiction in the Quantum Universe* (1992) which examines Atwood's use of physics in *Cat's Eye* as it relates to subject–object relations. In actual fact, as I will demonstrate, almost every major theme in Atwood's writing—the formation of feminine identity, the construction of personal past and cultural history, body image, colonization—all are at some point described in terms of the basic laws of physics. In particular, Atwood applies new discoveries about the interrelationship of time, space, energy, and matter to significant aspects of human experience, especially women's experience under patriarchy.

We know that for centuries science has been culturally coded as masculine as opposed to the more feminine arts and letters.[1] At one point Atwood suggests, with some humor, that natural science originated in the male desire to avoid comparing penises, scientific measurements being a transfer of the male obsession with size (*Good Bones* 98–99). Yet physics, the "hard-

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est" and most masculine science of all, has in this century become modestly aware of fundamental limits.[2] Scientists have had to accept restrictions, uncertainty, and a certain degree of inscrutability. With the exploration of the subatomic realm, it now seems to students of Atwood's generation that "The universe is hard to pin down; it changes when you look at it, as if it resists being known" (*Cat's Eye* 410), primarily because the observer affects the condition of the subatomic object under observation.[3] To the extent that relativity theory and quantum mechanics recognize such limits, to the extent that they look at interrelationships and participation, Atwood has been able to use these bodies of knowledge to describe metaphorically women's constraints and their adaptive strategies. As we shall see, she also invokes scientific ideas to a limited extent in her role as a writer, in the forms her novels take. Of course, neither relativity theory nor quantum mechanics strictly applies to the macroworld of human experience; indeed, the way physics has gone off stage, so to speak, has been disturbing and alienating for laypeople this century. What Atwood does is demonstrate that scientific models can be used to describe figuratively the middle, human realm once we switch from the physical to the psychological. Her use of a scientific frame doesn't so much tell us something new about human experience as give us new terms in which to view our behavior—which is to partly create a new reality.

Atwood's references to science should not be altogether surprising, given the interest in science that runs in the family: Among immediate relatives, her father is an entomologist and her brother a neurophysiologist. Atwood herself enjoyed studying science at school, so much so that she believes that if she hadn't become a writer she would have gone on with science (Sandler 46), and today she reads popular scientific accounts as a recreation (Walker 176). There is no evidence that Atwood possesses a thorough grasp of physics or that she has any serious intent to instruct her readers. Instead, she focuses on a few striking ideas and runs with them in her imagination. Her sources are already-mediated popularizations, not the original papers of Einstein, say, or Heisenberg. On the acknowledgments page of *Cat's Eye*, Atwood writes:

> The physics and cosmology sideswiped herein are indebted to Paul Davies, Carl Sagan, John Gribbin, and Stephen W. Hawking, for their entrancing books on these subjects, and to my nephew, David Atwood, for his enlightening remarks about strings.[4]

Clearly, this author is making no pretensions about having a profound understanding of science (even deferring to her nephew). She is offering her own "rendition,"[5] which can be heard by those outside the field, by those

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who have never read these men or the men who preceded them, a rendition that uncovers a similarity between science and other fields such as feminist thought. Atwood is not suggesting, nor am I, that feminism directly influenced science, nor that science has in this regard influenced feminist thinking. But one can see them as part of a common episteme where their consonance is intriguing.[6]

Scientific ideas appear as theme, as metaphor, and as narrative structure in Atwood's works. There is a particular concentration of explicit references to science in *Cat's Eye* and a more implicit treatment in *The Robber Bride*. *Cat's Eye* tells the story of an artist, Elaine Risley, who returns to Toronto for a retrospective of her work and at the same time looks back on her own life, especially her relationship to Cordelia, who bullied Elaine as a child. Much of the science enters the novel through Elaine's brother, Stephen (named after Hawking), who becomes a top physicist before being murdered by terrorists. *The Robber Bride* follows three characters: Roz, the head of a successful business; Charis, a well-meaning New Age psychic; and Tony, a diminutive history professor whose specialty is war. What they have in common is that each has been manipulated and betrayed by a protean and evil character named Zenia, who they at first think is dead but who returns to cause further pain to this group of friends before finally meeting her end. My discussion will focus on these novels and will highlight both explicit references to science and more latent possibilities for using science to describe women's experiences that Atwood's writing opens up by suggesting that apparently bizarre features of twentieth-century physics are already familiar to many women.

ENERGY-MATTER

In Atwood's writing, matter is pictured as energy; for example, skyscrapers are described as "gravestones of cold light" or "Frozen assets" (*Cat's Eye* 9), and bodies as "pure energy, solidified light" (*Cat's Eye* 258). Elaine, the protagonist of *Cat's Eye*, learned from her scientist brother that "matter and energy are aspects of each other." So "It's as if everything is made of solid light" (235). She has also learned that "matter is not really solid. It's just a bunch of widely spaced atoms moving at greater or lesser speeds" (*Cat's Eye* 235). This subatomic picture is used by Atwood's heroines to express their everyday fears. Elaine voices her insecurity and lack of support as a fear of "the spaces between the atoms you could fall so easily through" (*Cat's Eye* 395). In *The Robber Bride*, when Charis fears she might lose track of Zenia, she speculates that "If you knew enough about matter you could walk through walls" (195). An unsettling prospect.

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There are several references in Atwood's writing to the apparent transformation of energy into matter and matter into energy. As an artist, Elaine is seen pouring her energy into her paintings so that they can materialize. "Whatever energy they have came out of me," she notes. "I'm what's left over" (*Cat's Eye* 431). Elsewhere there are energy transfers among women characters or between these characters and the material world. This is particularly prevalent in *The Robber Bride* where Charis, for instance, sets out to transfer her "positive" or "good" energy into the ailing Zenia (222, 224). These exchanges often result in a change in physical appearance, usually with an inverse relation between energy and mass. Take the relationship between Elaine and her antagonist, Cordelia, in *Cat's Eye*. When Cordelia is lethargic, she gains "limp weight," which makes her "bloated and watery," whereas Elaine is trim and energetic (275). When Cordelia is on top of things again, she is thin and attractive, and Elaine is at a disadvantage (319–20). In the end, Cordelia is once more a defeated, bloated, and passive lump in a mental institution, with all the energy belonging to Elaine (377).

Forms of emotional energy also materialize in Atwood's writing. For instance, in *The Robber Bride,* Roz sees red when she's angry. And not just metaphorically. "She actually sees it, a red haze obscuring her eyes" (435). Charis observes an even more variegated manifestation when Zenia is angry: "A dark aura swirls out from around her. . . . It's a turbulent muddy green, shot through with lines of blood red and greyish black" (*Robber* 66). Atwood has color-coded emotions before; for example, she describes a particular "pale-mauve hostility" among women in *The Edible Woman* (16). But in *The Robber Bride,* color has taken on material form, energy appears to have mass, and mass, energy.

A particularly sensitive character like Charis also claims to be able to detect characters' electrical fields (*Robber* 62). In a bad environment she feels "Ions are bombarding her, wavelets of menacing energy" (*Robber* 61), and when the evil Zenia enters, even Tony, a less-observant character, feels "Waves of ill will flow out of her like cosmic radiations" (*Robber* 33). Sexual abuse is also depicted in terms of bad energy. To survive her abusive uncle, Charis converted her body/matter into energy/spirit and escaped in an astral "body of light" (*Robber* 394). She dreamt she could in this way "change herself into energy and pass through solid objects" (*Robber* 394–95).

QUANTUM WOMEN AND NEWTONIAN MEN

Atwood's world is one of radical uncertainty, a continuation of the modernist angst famously encapsulated in Yeats's "Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold," which she cannot resist citing (*Robber* 91). For the historian, Tony,

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"everything has been called into question. Even in the best of times, the daily world is tenuous to her, a thin iridescent skin held in place by surface tension" (*Robber* 35; note the scientific "surface tension"). Atwood's heroines *experience* the world of quantum mechanics. Most of them are unknown, protean, inscrutable, treacherous—even to themselves. They have "a tendency to exist" (*Cat's Eye* 261). They appear and fade and reappear. They are hard to keep track of. They marry and change their names (*Cat's Eye* 243). They are, in Tony's words, "a bugger to predict" (*Robber* 37). For these women, things are not separate or well behaved. Things pour into each other, slip under their feet, interpenetrate. Things are not even things. The bemused narrators can only observe and wonder that Newton or Descartes or Galileo ever thought they could fix things down. And by observing they wonder also to what extent they create what they see. They wonder how responsible they are for their own unhappiness, or happiness. It's a burden. It makes them light (*Cat's Eye* 13). Gravity reduces them, atom by atom (*Cat's Eye* 442). Irony and duality blur their vision. Like wave/particles, characters appear to be enemy/friends and self/others—all of which breeds a mild paranoia.

The men, on the other hand, are mostly perceived as solid, fixed, linear, sterling, predictable. They are a still point, a calculable presence. Even their betrayal is predictable and forgivable, whereas female treachery is inexplicable. The women know enough about women not to trust them, and not enough about men to withdraw forgiveness. They choose, at least, to see men as reliable and secure. They continue, in other words, to identify them with the traditional Western subject: "he" who is coherent and stable.[7]

Atwood suggests that some of men's solidity and predictability can be attributed to their inability to perceive others well. She portrays most men as being wrapped in unawareness and ignorance. When encouraged to be more sensitive, they become "trickier" and "more evasive"—that is, more like her female characters (*Cat's Eye* 285). Her male figures' apparent solidity may also be a result of Atwood's practice of not writing from the male character's perspective (except Nate in *Life Before Man*). Her men are simply more opaque as fictional characters.

Female characters are scrutinized more closely, and for them the uncertainty is profound. It affects every aspect of their interaction with the world, even their body boundaries. Part of the energy-matter transfer mentioned before is that Atwood's women physically intermingle with their environment, the extreme example being Charis who "wasn't sure where the edges of her body ended and the rest of the world began" (*Robber* 63). She is diffuse, like the quantum object, not hard-edged like the billiard ball model of previous science. Charis is "so penetrable; sharp edges stick into

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her," whereas "whatever slams into [her lover] bounces right off" (*Robber* 210). This diffuseness could be related to women's plural, multizoned sexuality, what Irigaray refers to as women's diversified geography of pleasure (353). A more soluble self-other boundary could also be said to reflect women's position in mother-child relationships: both a woman's ability to literally incorporate another in the womb when pregnant and the female child's close identification with the mother.[8] The latter psychological attachment could also be a trait that male scientists and writers share with women. A longtime observer of literary artists and scientists, N. Katherine Hayles notes a similar blurring of boundaries in D. H. Lawrence's writing and in quantum physics, and suggests that Lawrence shares with scientists an anxiety that "is bound up with the drive to achieve an autonomous identity independent of the mother" (110). From the mother's perspective, Atwood portrays a woman's body during pregnancy as frighteningly amorphous and "fluid" (*Robber* 265). The incorporation is disturbingly parasitic. Again, in *The Edible Woman*, Marian hardly recognizes her friend when she is released from pregnancy because:

> During the later, more vegetable stage of Clara's pregnancy she had tended to forget that Clara had a mind at all or any perceptive faculties above the merely sentient and sponge-like, since she had spent most of her time being absorbed in, or absorbed by, her tuberous abdomen. (130)

In general, Marian feels suffocated by a "thick sargasso-sea of femininity," by the continual interchange between women and their environment, "the continual flux between the outside and the inside, taking things in, giving them out, chewing, words, potato-chips, burps, grease, hair, babies . . ." She wants something solid, a man apparently, to keep from being sucked into it (167).

More philosophically, Atwood relates this fear to women's epistemological and hence ontological subordination. Women's edges are uncertain and their self-definition blurred because, Atwood suggests, they do not know or see themselves—though they are beginning to. Her women characters, so long ignored or relegated as Other, still mostly see themselves as men do, as fragments, as fetishized and commodified erotic parts. They therefore fear self-disintegration, they fear being stretched and losing shape altogether. Since her first novel, *The Edible Woman*, Atwood has made it clear that a woman's tendency to intermingle and be diffuse is not an advantage but indicates a lack of power. The experience of fission also reflects the demands of women's positions in a social field where they are subject to contrary forces and are expected to play plural roles.

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Atwood's male observers try to impose on women a definite and containable shape or shapes to their liking. Josef, her art teacher, at one point transforms Elaine into a Pre-Raphaelite figure so that she hardly recognizes herself. All her life Cordelia is shaped and misshaped under her father's observation. Elaine notes the patriarchal perturbation:[9] "Dinners at Cordelia's house are of two kinds: those when her father is there and those when he isn't." When he is not there, everything is casual, and mother and sisters come and go randomly. But when her father is present, they set themselves and the table more formally, and everyone stays in her place (*Cat's Eye* 267). In other regards, the father does not have to be physically present to keep his wife and children in line. Like other fathers in the novel—and, by implication, like God, the Father of fathers—he is often invisible but strongly present. Atwood's point is that it is difficult to say what women are without male observation: Women have always been women-as-observed-by-men, just as the subatomic object is what it is because it is being observed. Outside this observation, it is difficult to say what exists. For example, light takes different forms, waves or particles, depending on the experimental apparatus used. So too have Atwood's female characters been determined by men. They feel the constant surveillance. Roz, a powerful CEO, describes "the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur" (*Robber* 388). Women have been taught to internalize this scrutiny and to enforce gendering on each other. This is Atwood's focus in *Cat's Eye*, a novel that painstakingly reconstructs how Elaine's friends/enemies instruct her in femininity. It appears to be an account of infra-female interaction, but the male voice is ever present. For example, Cordelia upbraids Elaine for not "measuring up" (124), a key male and scientific term Cordelia would have heard from her father. That patriarchy has always depended on this kind of compliance is a point heavily underscored by Atwood's dystopian novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood's social model is not a linear power hierarchy but a more complex Maxwellian, or Foucauldian, field of action.

THE MATTER OF SPACE-TIME

Where the male—and by extension, female—observation has had a huge, physical impact is on women's bodies. Atwood closely inspects the importance of the body as space and mass for women's cultural identity, highlighting the obvious relation between the individual body and the body politic. This is played out in *The Handmaid's Tale* where the association of women and body/matter reverts to an Aristotelian economy of procreation in which

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women passively supply the mass that is shaped by male force. Here and elsewhere in Atwood's writing, women are so closely identified with the body that a change in body shape, in space occupied, generally means a new relation to the rest of the world. Food is a quotidian example of energy-matter interchange to which women pay particular attention. When the body stores food (energy) as mass, it has dire consequences for women. A strong ideological image of femininity insists that women shouldn't be massive or occupy too much space, whereas Elaine observes of boys that "There always seems to be more of them in the room than there actually are" (*Cat's Eye* 108). Women are taught to be ordered and controlled. Diets are entered into like warfare and result in intimate battles fought by women against themselves; again we see this clearly in Roz, who pictures her body as "a besieged fortress" (*Robber* 79). This cultural pressure leads to all kinds of eating disorders, a perennial topic in Atwood's writing. Occasionally, there is a suggestion that body fat can be powerful. In *Lady Oracle*, as the protagonist, Joan, grows increasingly fat, she becomes invisible to men and to women, and this provides a certain power and protection. It also contravenes physics in that the more mass she has, the less observable she becomes as an object. However, ordinarily, occupying more space means a serious reduction in self-esteem for women and signifies defeat, not growth.

SPACE-TIME IN LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

In a lecture on "The First Pico-seconds and the Quest for a Unified Field Theory," Stephen reminds his audience, which includes his sister Elaine, that "time cannot exist without space and space-time without . . . matter-energy" (*Cat's Eye* 352). Elsewhere Atwood suggests, perhaps whimsically, that space and time are especially closely linked in women's minds. She speculates that men's brains separate space and time in a way women's don't: For men, there is "Space over here, time over there . . . in their own sealed compartments" (*Good Bones* 76), whereas Atwood's heroines repeatedly conceptualize time in spatial terms. Elaine thinks of time "having a shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water" (*Cat's Eye* 3). A more humble image emerges later when she thinks of herself as a bag lady picking up temporal shreds (*Cat's Eye* 408). In *The Robber Bride*, Charis domesticates the bizarre and unusual by explaining foresight in this way: "there is a fold in time, like the way you fold the top bedsheet down to make a border, and if you stick a pin through at any spot, then the two pinholes are aligned, and that's the way it is when you foresee the future" (255). Atwood's characters also recognize cosmic space-time relations,

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as when Elaine looks up into outer space and realizes that what she sees is the past because stars are echoes from another time (*Cat's Eye* 110).

As a novelist, Atwood likes to thematize and play with the space-time of the form in which she is writing. Her work reminds us that (written) literature has always spatialized time in that the book form spreads a narrative's beginning, middle, and end before its readers all at once: While the convention is to read the text sequentially, readers can dip in at any point. Atwood's narratives realize this potential for spatialization by interlacing past and present occurrences, so that even when reading sequentially the reader feels past and present events coexist (in space and time) together. In *Cat's Eye*, for example, we are driven through a series of temporal loops, from the fictional present back into past events that appear immediate by being described in the present tense. *The Robber Bride* extends this temporal spatialization to include even the future. This novel features not only prolepsis or novelistic foresight but also—contrary to current physics—a character's accurate foretelling of future events. As a child, Charis apparently could always tell when a telephone was about to ring, and she foresees both her mother's and Zenia's deaths. Her insight appears to be ratified by events in the novel, though since the narrative voice often merges with the characters' voices, it is not always easy to determine the author's opinion of these supernatural and scientifically heterodox powers.

Atwood's predominant interest is her characters' reconstructions of the past in the light of the present and their coming to understand the past's effect on their present selves. Both *Cat's Eye* and *The Robber Bride* are haunted books, books about haunting, about how space is drenched in time. In *Cat's Eye*, this is described in loosely relativistic terms. Elaine fantasizes about moving faster than the speed of light and so traveling backward in time, in what mathematicians as well as artists call "imaginary time" (143).[10] This is what she achieves in a sense, through memory, which allows us all to be tachyonic (faster than the speed of light).[11] In the novel's present, Elaine is in "the middle of her life," which is a time and a place (*Cat's Eye* 13). She is (in a variation of the French phrase) of an *un*certain age. She travels back to Toronto looking for herself, for certainty, for the elusive Grand Unified Theory, or at least for the cats' eyes on the road that will provide direction. She is convinced that she will find closure when she faces her old tormentor, Cordelia, her Einsteinian "twin" (*Cat's Eye* 434).[12] She wants to know if Cordelia is moving through time at the same rate, or if, like Elaine's dead brother, her other twin (*Cat's Eye* 414), Cordelia has stopped existing in the present. In Toronto, where she and Cordelia used to exist, the past is more real than the present, more real than her present existence in Vancouver, with its unreal-because-beautiful landscape. Elaine can't believe in the

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latter's postmodern hyperreality. She identifies instead with the past when things weren't post this or post that because they were "real enough to have a name of their own" (*Cat's Eye* 90). Toronto, the old Huron Indian name for "meeting place," fails to live up to its name. The meeting with Cordelia—which Elaine's narrative projects—never happens. She does not even know if Cordelia (like Schrodinger's cat) is alive or dead.[13] If the vastness of Canada has a center, Toronto would be it. But now even Elaine doesn't feel at home there. The story ends with her literally in midair, flying back to Vancouver. The form of the novel thus remains uncertain, diffuse, and open. This lack of resolution Atwood elsewhere relates to the Uncertainty Principle in physics, which suggests to her that "There's something in the nature of things that's against closure" (Hancock 196).[14] The lack of closure has caused dissatisfaction among reviewers of *Cat's Eye*, but it is wholly deliberate on Atwood's part and not an indication of her inability to orchestrate a more immediately satisfying plot. As Susan Strehle asserts, Atwood's point is that "The subject—even the artist—can't find an absolute frame from which to validate its perspective but floats without attainable certainty in relative space-time" (Strehle 184).

In *The Robber Bride*, it is Zenia, another tormentor, who haunts the other characters and, again, they are not always sure if she is alive or dead. While in *Cat's Eye*, space-time is explicitly discussed in scientific terms, in *The Robber Bride* it tends to come up under the discussion of history, the central idea being that what one discovers as a historian depends on one's viewpoint in time and space. Atwood has caught the contemporary academic excitement and anxiety over this and other discoveries of constructiveness in the social sciences. For example, she both supports and satirizes the historiographical debate in the epilogue to *The Handmaid's Tale*. Most constructivist accounts of history have come in the wake of new depictions of scientific method, most notably the late Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. There is also some kinship between this view of history and essential features of modern physics: relativity's foregrounding of viewpoint and the quantum mechanical notion that the observer affects and is part of the observation. Atwood doesn't make these analogies explicit, but she does enact in her writing what both natural and social scientists have to say about epistemological subjectivities. *The Robber Bride* features a full-blown relativistic framework that demonstrates how knowledge is both temporally and spatially situated. Readers of *The Robber Bride* occupy three different characters' viewpoints, three constructions of the "same" past events. Interwoven are discussions of professional history making that highlight uncertainty and the uneasy relation between factual temporal knowledge and sub-

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jective agenda or memory. Atwood's professional historian, Tony, acknowledges that

> Every sober-sided history is at least half sleight-of-hand: the right hand waving its poor snippets of fact, out in the open for all to verify, while the left hand busies itself with its own devious agendas, deep in its hidden pockets. (*Robber* 457–58)

This applies both to personal and cultural memory. Private "battles" between Zenia and the others are counterpointed with discussions of larger military battles that Tony is studying. In each case, viewpoint is crucial. To better understand historical events, Tony spatializes them by constructing maps and material models that she can observe in total and from different angles. However, adding together the three characters' views of events in the novel does not provide the reader with as complete a picture as Tony hopes she enjoys when looking down on her models of famous conflicts.

Much of Atwood's writing explores history making in colonial and postcolonial situations. In this case, space-time formation affects energy. As a colony, Canada borrowed another's history, a faux past. At Elaine's school, stories of British monarchs and Scottish clans were superimposed on Canada's own history or histories to produce a blurring of reality and an uncertain knowledge. Students like Elaine had to struggle to orient themselves in space and time, and this blocked the energy needed to focus on self-identity. As Atwood remarks in an interview, "You can only indulge in the luxury of figuring out yourself when you're oriented in space and time. [As a colony] Canada was a country that lacked such orientation" (Hammond 110).

That history, of whatever kind, is something of a subjective narrative ought not to be altogether shocking. The concurrent discovery that science, too, resembles a narrative has been more disconcerting.[15] To take a fundamental example, Newton's picture of Absolute Space and Absolute Time,[16] twin pillars of the ordered universe, has now been revealed to be just that, a picture, and one that is no longer entirely useful. What scientists have discovered is that time can run at different rates, depending on one's viewpoint. As her brother, Stephen, reports to the incredulous Elaine, time runs faster in some places than in others and "can be stretched or shrunk" (*Cat's Eye* 235).

> Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. If you can bend space you can bend time also, and if you knew enough and could move faster than light you could travel backward in time and exist in two places at once. (*Cat's Eye* 3)

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The latter idea is still hypothetical. But what has been made increasingly clear is that scientists, like historians, shape and measure time for human purposes: In other words, science is another way to give time meaning. For centuries, scientists have sought to order and calibrate time, generally employing a spatial representation like a clock face. So accustomed are we to think of time according to our conventional grids that we tend to confuse instrument and object, as in Atwood's Relativistic joke: "Why did the moron throw the clock out the window? To see time fly" (*Cat's Eye* 271). That the actual measurement chosen is fairly arbitrary is something Atwood stresses and has some fun with; for example, in *Cat's Eye* she refers to the "futon dimension" (13), the gentrification of neighborhoods (16), "best before" dates (159), and classroom decorations as ways of calibrating time:

> At school we make Easter eggs out of construction paper, pink and purple and blue, and stick them onto the windows. After that it's tulips, and soon there are real tulips. It seems to be a rule that the paper things always appear before the real ones. (64)

More seriously, Atwood observes how both art and technology are employed to try to fix or stretch time: Museums, photographs, and monuments are all seen as devices to halt its movement. One reason why Atwood herself writes is "to stop or bring back time." She sees fiction as providing a home for physical objects of the past, this being a primary motive for writing *Cat's Eye* (Ingersoll 236–37). But she also realizes that art doesn't exactly capture the past. Nor does time freeze art. The past is gone, and art keeps on changing. This is what Elaine discovers in her gallery retrospective. Though we think of painting as a spatial mode, when she surveys her pictures Elaine declares: "I walk the room, surrounded by the time I've made" (*Cat's Eye* 431). Her paintings embody time past as she saw it then. They also change through time because they are regarded from different temporal viewpoints. Physical deterioration is not a large consideration here, though elsewhere in the novel it is. Throughout Elaine's visit to the city of her youth, she is struck by physical alteration, by time's ability to dematerialize or reduce matter. The adult Elaine discovers that a window ledge on which she used to sit is now "empty air" (*Cat's Eye* 331), doors she used to enter she now enters only in her mind. Time, it seems, can make space and matter a concept.

SCIENTIFIC IMPERIALISM

Nevertheless, materiality is still of fundamental importance. Atwood concludes that what links science, imperialism, and patriarchy is control of the

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body. Just as men have controlled and subdued the female body, so colonists have traditionally been depicted as conquering a nature identified as female. Atwood's usual fictional setting is a Canada emerging from British domination and facing the economic imperialism (if there is ever any other kind) of the United States. Women in such a situation are doubly colonized. Atwood makes the analogy between patriarchy and imperialism explicit when she remarks with characteristically dry humor:

> Canada as a separate but dominated country has done about as well under the U.S. as women, worldwide, have done under men; about the only position they've ever adopted toward us, country to country, has been the missionary position, and we were not on top. ("Only Position" 20)

In her suffering, the man Elaine most identifies with is one who has been feminized through colonization, Mr. Banerji, a native of the British Empire's subcontinent (*Cat's Eye* 138). She unconsciously detects a similarity between his position and hers. What both women and the colonized desire, according to Atwood, is to proclaim "We exist" and "We don't wish particularly to be defined by you" (Hammond 110). The difference is that while shaking off a feeling of inferiority can take more than one generation for the postcolonial, it is even harder to step out of global patriarchy.

But invading territories and putting down stakes are not the only ways of conquering nature. Western scientists, too, have traditionally been depicted as subduing nature-as-female.[17] They share some of the same attitude as colonists: conquer, map, know, and sell. Thus, despite the new theoretical consciousness of limits, despite the recognition that objectivity and absolute knowledge are receding, Atwood's (male) scientists go on trying to make their mark, like young Stephen peeing the names of planets in the sand (*Cat's Eye* 72). The counting and the naming and the mapping continue, the hunt for the first picosecond, the great white quark, the distant stars.[18] But the underworld of shifting objects, of unpredictability and evasion, this is the world of women. Men are protected by their unawareness. The "numbers men," as Elaine calls them (*Cat's Eye* 353), are beginning to discover it, but Atwood suggests that women know this realm already, from the inside. We see in her particularly feminine forms of *bildungsroman* the nascent self beginning to emerge and the observed object rising into a confused subjecthood. Science began the process of demystifying itself and its authority as (male) observer early this century and Atwood has taken a cue from there.

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BRICOLAGE

As we have seen, Atwood's recent novels suggest new possibilities for describing women's experiences in scientific terms. Several prominent postmodern themes appear under this guise and have thus reached a popular as well as an academic audience—for example, otherwise esoteric themes such as epistemological subjectivity, cultural inscription on the body, and the instability of the subject. Atwood is able to use intellectual concepts to reconnect the personal and the abstract, the local and the cosmic. This has always been an important function of the fiction writer, but particularly so in an era of disciplinary segregation and an increasingly formidable science. While most writers who invoke scientific ideas are male and write about men's encounter with science, Atwood looks at these matters from a woman's perspective. This is still, regrettably, a relatively novel idea.

NOTES

[1] In the past couple of decades, there have been several excellent feminist studies of science and of women in science; see, for example, Ruth Bleier, Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, Helen Longino, Carolyn Merchant, Londa Schiebinger, and Nancy Tuana.

[2] Physicist Werner Heisenberg, a father of quantum mechanics, spoke of the return to natural science's "original self-limitation" (*Physicists' Conception* 180).

[3] One example of observation affecting the observed is when light is shone on the subatomic object to determine its position. In so doing, light photons will collide with the object and change its momentum.

[4] Davies, Sagan, and Hawking are professional scientists also known for their popularizations of science. Gribbin is more exclusively a popularizer.

[5] In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Atwood refers to her earlier job of translating psychologists' jargon into terms ordinary people could understand. She claims it is not possible to make this translation of every subject. Thus, "You can get a rendition of advanced physics, but it is just a rendition" (Hancock 209).

[6] Though she does not refer to Atwood's work, Katherine Hayles has brilliantly highlighted the simultaneous appearance in science and in literature of ideas such as the field concept; see, Hayles's *The Cosmic Web.*

[7] Linda Hutcheon also compares the conventionally male "single, coherent, rational" subject with Atwood's women who "seem to possess subjectivities that are much less easily defined in traditional terms, that are more fragmented and even multiple" (145). However, she does not liken this to Atwood's understanding of modern science.

[8] In a study of Atwood's work, J. Brooks Bouson invokes Nancy Codorow's psychology of gender in this regard but is not entirely convinced of this as a universal description of female experience (Bouson 22).

[9] In scientific terms, *perturbation* refers to the effect on a system of a measuring or observing instrument. It is usually conceived of as a kind of disturbance.

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[10] Later, when Stephen is killed, Elaine imagines him traveling into the past (her memory) by falling faster than the speed of light (*Cat's Eye* 414).

[11] A tachyon is a hypothetical particle that is imagined as traveling faster than the speed of light.

[12] Elaine's brother Stephen summarizes Einstein's famous thought experiment thus: "if you put one identical twin in a high-speed rocket for a week, he'd come back to find his brother ten years older than he is himself" (*Cat's Eye* 235). Atwood seems fascinated by the notion of twins, going on to portray a harmonious set in *The Robber Bride.* But the idea also appears frightening, as in many references to twins in *Cat's Eye.* Elaine dreams her mother had twins, one of whom is missing (179); she observes a jar of dead twins in a zoology department (181); and she pretends to be a vampire twin of herself to scare Cordelia (249).

[13] Schrodinger's cat refers to a thought experiment that goes as follows: A cat is placed in a box where a random subatomic occurrence can release a gas that will kill it. The box is sealed and the experiment begun, but there is no way of knowing what is happening inside the box without opening it up. After a moment, the gas has either been released or not. There is no way of knowing. So one interpretation of quantum mechanics states that the cat is neither alive nor dead but in a probabilistic state, and only when someone looks in the box does one possibility actualize.

[14] Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle states that one cannot simultaneously measure both the position and momentum of a particle with complete accuracy in both cases: the greater the accuracy of one measurement, the more the other measurement will be in error.

[15] See, for example, Latour, Nash, and Ormiston and Sassower.

[16] Newton had stated that

> Absolute, True and Mathematical Time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to any thing external . . . Absolute Space, in its own nature, without regard to any thing external, remains always similar and immovable. (1:9)

[17] For an extensive discussion of the male scientist conquering female nature, see Carolyn Merchant.

[18] Elaine notices advertisements that sell stars: For a payment, you receive a map of the stars that includes "your" star, named after you (*Cat's Eye* 354).

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Transgression in the Fiction of Philip Roth

Robert M. Greenberg

In *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) Philip Roth provides an explanation for Nathan Zuckerman's involvement with transgression as a man and a writer. Roth describes first-generation immigrant fathers as "pioneering Jewish fathers bursting with taboos" who produce second-generation sons "boiling with temptations." A page later he adds about his literary alter ego, "If it hadn't been for his father's frazzled nerves and rigid principles and narrow understanding, he'd never have been a writer at all," "a second-generation American son possessed by . . . exorcism" of his father's "demons" (268–69). This intergenerational interpretation of the cultural origin of transgression in Roth's fiction illuminates the details of many of his narratives. Yet an important dimension that is missing from this analysis is a social or *psychosocial* perspective. Roth's frustration with his subcultural position as a Jew in American society is, in many ways, the irritant that produces his fiction. His irritation, however, is not simply the result of overt resistance by mainstream society. His frustration is also clearly determined by his position in Jewish-American culture—by his embroilment in and rebellion against the world of his parents. In contrast with Norman Mailer, who is also fixed on transgression and also Jewish (although scarcely involved in Jewishness), the origin of Roth's major theme is located and delineated in terms of cultural dynamics and subcultural perspectives on mainstream existence. Where Mailer has been more politically radical, ideological, and heroically disposed, Roth has shown himself, beneath the brittle surface of his social defiance, to be rooted in Jewish and European traditions and in feelings of vulnerability to persecution. Moreover, this substratum of Jewish feelings and ideas in Roth has resulted in a far more explicit burden of moral/ethical sensibility in his work at the same time that Roth has striven

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like Mailer to achieve authenticity and artistic power through cultural and psychological transgression.

Another facet of this ethical substratum in Roth the novelist is a certain ambivalence about succeeding in the American mainstream. To transgress is to step across a boundary or past a limit; and Roth's success in bursting the boundaries that confined his father's generation is rife with crosscurrents. A second-generation American from a lower-middle-class Jewish home, Roth dramatizes in his fiction the arc of a career of a talented literary rebel who uses liberal times, the permission of his gift, and early success to express damned-up Jewish ambition, appetite, and anger, only then to suffer the backlash, the countercurrent, of communal recrimination and psychological guilt. The elation of success quickly changes into the tribulation and confusion of misunderstanding.

This essay examines the omnipresent theme of transgression in Roth's fiction from *Portnoy's Complaint* (1967) to the *Zuckerman Bound* trilogy (1979–85); it also includes a section on transgression in his recent, more explicitly postmodernist work up to *Sabbath's Theater* (1995). Of particular interest is the psychosocial dimension of his narratives. Using a spatial model, I hope to show that, ultimately, transgression enables Roth to penetrate resistant domains and to go where he feels excluded psychologically and socially. Of final importance will be these questions: What is the dynamic relation for Roth between mainstream experience and his Jewish-American self? Does Roth build his house of fiction from outside the mainstream or inside? And if from outside, how does he manage this when his relation to Jewish-American life is also largely one of a rebel and existential outcast? As will become evident, defining Roth's footing as a novelist in the cultural field of American life has interesting implications for the value of the category "Jewish-American writer" when examining second- and third-generation writers.

We can begin, then, by turning the perspective provided by Roth himself in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) onto his first explicit work of boundary violation, *Portnoy's Complaint* (1967). In *Portnoy*, transgression involves a second-generation son's demand for instant gratification in defiance of his father's protracted effort to achieve economic and moral stability for his family. Alex Portnoy, described as New York City's Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity (204), has become a transgressive monologist impelled toward narratives of outrageous sexual and psychological candor and uncomplimentary family satire. The motive of honoring the liberal values of his father and mother has been superseded by the imperatives of a seriocomic

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artist. Only comic marksmanship at his parents foibles and the pleasure of venting his fury stir him.

We learn that as a boy young Alex Portnoy nearly suffocates from parental expectations that he be the smartest, neatest, and best-behaved little boy in his school. His melodramatic mother, aspiring to impress Gentile America with her perfect offspring, supervises him to death and turns minor infractions into operatic disappointments. At times, for frustrating her, he is locked out of his home. With adolescence, masturbation becomes the spearhead of Alex's rebellion. In manhood, sexuality remains at the center of his effort to overturn inhibitions and push back repression. Portnoy contends his transgressions often produce guilt: "Why must the least deviation from respectable convention cause me such inner hell? . . . When I know *better* than the taboos!" (124). Most times, however, he seems to find it is surprisingly easy to transgress; the only obstacle to freedom is his hesitation. After being treated to his first lobster dinner by his sister's boyfriend, Portnoy is tempted to masturbate on the darkened bus back to New Jersey with a Gentile girl sitting beside him. The adult Portnoy retrospectively speculates that being encouraged to violate the Jewish dietary code also prompted him to take a sexual risk:

> The taboo so easily and simply broken, confidence may have been given to the whole slimy, suicidal Dionysian side of my nature; the lesson may have been learned that to break the law, all you have to do is—just go ahead and break it! . . . Stop trembling and quaking and finding it unimaginable and beyond you: all you have to do, *is do it!* (78–79)

Not wanting to feel "obedient and helpless" (73) also impels Portnoy to challenge the mainstream culture. And here as well, his rebellion manifests itself sexually and revolves around his exclusive interest in Christian girls. If sex is exciting for Portnoy when it is secretive and "bad"—the antithesis of the moral goodness imbued in Alex by his parents—sex with a "shiksa" is twice as arousing. It violates not only the Jewish community's expectations that he marry a Jew, but it also imposes his dirty will on the clean blonde daughters of the Gentile middle class; it asserts his arrival in the mainstream and his full entitlement as an male American. "I don't seem to stick my click up these girls, as much as I stick it up their backgrounds—as though through fucking I will discover America. *Conquer* America—maybe that's more like it" (235).

Finally, there is the transgressive quality of Portnoy expressing his inner life in a long "complaint" or psychoanalytic confession, which inadvertently (or deliberately) wounds and offends readers who, like the author's

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parents, also oversupervise their children. Roth's selection of the first-person confessional monologue as the narrative form and viewpoint dramatizes his intention to unburden his psyche, despite the pain he'll cause to his family and the delight he'll provide to others—like himself—who are liberated, freewheeling, and at odds with their religious and ethnic backgrounds. The monologue also persistently generates an awareness of the performative transgressions on the author's part, violating the limits of decorum for serious literature. Roth repeatedly amazes, delights, and shocks. At the peak of his masturbatory mischief, Portnoy tells us he has made use of a piece of liver before his mother prepared it. ("So. Now you know the worst thing I have ever done. I fucked my own family's dinner" [134].) In Portnoy's stream of associations about his rabbi and his bar mitzvah, Roth goes from ridiculing the pretentious enunciation of rabbis, Jewish racism, and prejudice against "goyim," to turning directly on his own people: "Weep," he says, "for your own pathetic selves . . . sucking and sucking on the sour grape of a religion! Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew Jew! It is coming out of my ears already, the saga of the suffering Jews! Do me a favor, my people, and stick your suffering heritage up your suffering ass—*I happen also to be a human being!*" (76). The factor that seems to determine whether he gives offense, especially to other Jews, is whether the reader can sympathize with satire or criticism of his or her own tribe, or whether the reader is automatically offended. As the last quoted passage implies, *nothing* is sacred to Roth.

Irving Howe takes exception to Roth's treatment of Jews from the Patimkins of "Goodbye, Columbus" to Alex's parents in *Portnoy's Complaint.* Howe complains that "their history is invoked for the passing of adverse judgment . . . but their history is not allowed to emerge so as to make them understandable as human beings." He adds, sagely, "A thrust against vulgarity can itself become vulgar" (73–74). Yet, if in *Portnoy's Complaint* Howe is expecting a finished and rounded artistic product, he has missed the point about Roth's new approach to the novel. Roth is in the process of creating a new set of goals (and a new set of transgressive pleasures) for an art consisting largely of process and catharsis—an art of enthusiasm, of defiantly going overboard, and of believing that "truth" lies in comic hyperbole and blasphemy, in farce and cruel satire. Fiction about one's cultural group should not be the product of a detached and mature viewpoint but of perceptions in extremis. The struggle of an artist like Roth for authenticity of identity is a struggle with shadows of the past and illusions about the present; occasional mouthfuls of fresh air and moments of perspective emerge. Hence, instead of control and disengagement as achieved in *Letting Go* (1962) and *When She Was Good* (1967), Roth begins to envision a semiautobiographical literature formed from baseness, messiness, and "im-

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maturity," a subversive approach to society that seeks to invert conventional theories and shock expectations about the appropriate material, motives, and goals of art.

As Roth embarked on the lengthy effort to write *My Life as a Man* (1974), he also worked in a "lighter mode" on *Our Gang* (1971), *The Breast* (1972), and *The Great American Novel* (1973) (*Reading Myself* 110). In the mid-1960s, moreover, we know Roth underwent several years of psychoanalysis (Searles xvi) and was drawn, as *Portnoy* reflects, into the possibilities of a fluid confessional fictional mode. In the early 70s, therefore, he was juggling the light and the heavy and struggling to reconcile the fluid confessional mode with both the ironic, detached aspects of modernism and the kind of reflexiveness generally identified with postmodernism. In *My Life as a Man*, he succeeds in synthesizing these formal and stylistic modalities in one novel on transgression and psychological confusion.

Working at Hofstra University one day a week, Peter Tarnopol, the first-person narrator of the longest of the three fictions in *My Life as a Man* and the "author" of the other two stories about writer Nathan Zuckerman, teaches an honors reading seminar on a dozen masterpieces of his choosing. The course has "an unusually powerful hold" on him, and he teaches it with a "zealousness and vehemence" that leave him exhausted. After several semesters, he realizes "what the principle of selection was that lay behind" the novels he has chosen—the core subject was "transgression and punishment" (235).

In "My True Story" (97–334) about the young writer Tarnopol, punishment is the psychic torment he undergoes at the hands of his wife Maureen Johnson and his inability, once he's left her, to renounce his obsession with the way she manipulated and tormented him. Tarnopol's transgression is that he believes marriage to a Protestant girl from a troubled background—marriage, that is, to a victim without the benefits of his stable, Jewish upbringing—will be enlarging and liberating to him as a writer and Jewish man. His transgression—as Zuckerman explains in one of the parallel fictions ("Courting Disaster" 33–96) in the volume also about marriage to a Gentile—is that he denies in himself his "grandmothers' observations about Gentile disorder and corruption" (94).[1] His wife's former husband and daughter, says Zuckerman, "were the embodiment of what my grandparents, and great-grandparents . . . had loathed and feared: shagitz thuggery, shiksa wiliness. They were to me like figures out of a folk legend of the Jewish past . . ." (94–95). And as Zuckerman rejects the European folk wisdom of his family "as irrelevant to the kind of life that . . . [he] intended to lead"

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(93), Peter Tarnopol, when he is forced to decide about marrying *his* shiksa nemesis, ignores the advice of his brother and parents. He tells himself he is able to make the right moral decision; he's been prepared by his study of modern literature. "Honorable," "serious" (195–96), he believes he is "'up' to travail"—up to marrying in order to keep Maureen from suicide (193) and to avoid having an illegitimate offspring. He has to be, he tells himself, because there is no escape from the "intractability" of life (195–96).

My Life as a Man, especially the full-length novel within it, "My True Life," succeeds at being an artistic product—a detached, ordered, and self-contained exploration of personal experience—at the same time as it dramatizes a sense of life as an elusive process whose depths resist interpretation. Again and again, Tarnopol asks why he did not walk out on a relationship that was harmful to him (193, 214). The unconscious nature of the forces at work become the focus, the axis, of Tarnopol's retrospective inquiry. And because there is no fixed and tangible answer, the more striking feature of "My True Story" is its presentation of the messy processes of Tarnopol's marital history and ensuing psychoanalysis.

Another important feature, which is the outgrowth of Roth's orientation, is the tragicomic effect he achieves, eliciting not only empathy for young Tarnopol but also, in certain wild moments, a dismayed and frightened laughter at Tarnopol's deluded behavior. This dramatic effect, which is used in several of Roth's novels about transgression, I call Roth's "antic correction." Roth's ability to laugh harshly at his protagonists' expense emerges as Roth's way of coming to terms with the mortifying, out-of-control behavior they have fallen into. Making his protagonist a deluded or degraded object of ridicule is Roth's way of expiating his narrator's transgressions and releasing himself psychologically and artistically from the same bondage. Used first and notably in *Portnoy's Complaint* when Portnoy cannot get an erection with a confident female Israeli soldier, this kind of degrading comic incident enables Roth in his increasingly process-driven art (where values have become fluid and relativistic) to achieve a precise punitive judgment about his transgressive protagonist. His trick is to join these adversarial forces that have reduced his protagonist to deluded antics and invite us to laugh with him at what fools they have become.

The tension amidst confessional, modernist, and postmodernist modes are sidestepped in *The Professor of Desire* (1977). Instead, we find an unproblematic and uncomplicated first-person narrative in which a reliable, intelligent narrator both suffers and intelligently illuminates his suffering. This path of least resistance is not one Roth continues in *Zuckerman Bound*

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(1985), his trilogy about Nathan Zuckerman; there, as we shall see, the psychological insights of the narrator are not sufficient. The recalcitrant nature of the problems that Zuckerman encounters return Roth's work to the themes of intractability and obsessive pain. But in *The Professor of Desire* suffering and knowledge are in balance: psychological transparence is possible.

David Kepesh, a professor of comparative literature, plans the indecorous academic equivalent of writer Peter Tarnopol's blurring the line between his life and his fictional works. For the beginning of the course, Kepesh decides to use "the story of the *professor's* desire," his "erotic history," in order to authenticate the reality of the literature his class will be reading on the theme of sexual desire. It is even possible that the novel itself is intended to represent the ultimate product of his effort to relate personal history to literature (181–85).

The theme of *The Professor of Desire* is the psychological antithesis between domestic happiness and sexual excitement. The novel is developed by means of contrasting relationships. First, there are two young Swedish girls in London, Elisabeth and Birgitta, encountered during David Kepesh's postbaccalaureate Fulbright year. Then, described at greater length, there are contrasts in character and effect on Kepesh of Helen Baird and Claire Ovington, the first in the role of the damaging Gentile and the latter in the role of the posttraumatic and restorative upper-class WASP, the same part played in *My Life as a Man* by Susan McCall. Kepesh's reckless pursuit of sexual adventure with Birgitta and his location of Elisabeth in his thoughts as a secure marital alternative prefigure the pattern of his thinking in the rest of the novel, where his domestic contentment with Claire Ovington saves him from Helen Baird—although Claire inevitably proves to have her own shortcomings.

Sexual excitement and marital fulfillment are not reconcilable to David Kepesh. Their antithesis reflects his psychology and informs his outlook. Pulling and straining at trust and dependence, sex for Kepesh remains exciting when it involves violating taboos or evading stable structures—when it is subversive to the social order and reasserts the anarchy and egoism of his instincts. Sex becomes threatening and oppressive when there is resistance to novelty and an expectation of regularity and tolerance.

The Ghost Writer (1979) and the epilogue to the trilogy *Zuckerman Bound*, titled "The Prague Orgy" (1985), function as prologue and epilogue to two full-length, process-oriented novels. These two central novels establish the metanarrative of Philip Roth–Nathan Zuckerman, the notorious author of *Portnoy's Complaint–Carnovsky*.[2] Realizations of a kind of fiction that simu-

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lates both experiential process *and* impenetrability, the first of the two, *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), finds Zuckerman on the streets of New York recognized by sycophants and Jewish want-to-be writers; and the second, *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), takes place 3 years after the publication of *Carnovsky* and about 18 months after the onset of medically unexplained neck, shoulder, and arm pain has brought his life to a standstill and he has been reduced to a Prometheus on a playmat visited by girlfriends.

The trilogy begins in *The Ghost Writer* with a delicately wrought evocation of Hawthornian and Jamesian "romance" in which realism is superseded by a fanciful, inquiring, and transgressive imagination. At the most abstract level, *The Ghost Writer* can be said to employ the "symbolic method" that Charles Feidelson found in nineteenth-century New England writers where the narration symbolizes the voyaging consciousness of the artist searching for new modes of representing reality (1–76). At a certain point, the narration employs an experimental historical imagination that serves to extend Zuckerman's world beyond his sheltered experience and into a plausible fiction about a young woman who has survived her family in the Holocaust.

At the plot level, *The Ghost Writer* describes the visit in the 1950s of a young Jewish-American writer to E. I. Lonoff—"the region's most original storyteller since Melville and Hawthorne" (3)—whose demeanor and viewpoint is European, a combination perhaps of Bernard Malamud and I. B. Singer. E. I. Lonoff embodies personally and artistically an ideal antithetical to what has been admired in Roth's fictional writers-narrators since *Portnoy's Complaint.* Instead of instinct and spontaneity, Lonoff represents restraint and scrupulousness, the Apollonian over the Dionysian, the moral scruple over the transgressive impulse. Only a 23-year-old writer of profound, Old World earnestness would emulate him and attempt to synthesize these traits with his own New World mischievousness and slashing satirical propensities. Yet not only are the artistic values embodied by Lonoff reasonably congruent with certain Jewish writers of the 1950s, they also clearly represent an important and overlooked aspect of Philip Roth—the aspect that is responsible for the sacrifice, the scrupulousness, the delicate and clairvoyant empathy, and the comic detachment of his work—qualities, ironically, without which the achievements of this highly nuanced writer about transgression could not exist.

Ultimately, however, Manny Lonoff is a figure in a seriocomic mode. Lonoff's wife of 31 years derides him in front of young Zuckerman. She pleads with Manny to "chuck me out" (26–27), so they can give up their marital charade and he can live with Amy Bellette, the young woman whom he has rescued from postwar Europe. Hope Lonoff's portrait of the great

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writer as wanting *nothing* from her but silence, an absence of distraction, pinpoints his shortcoming as a husband: "There is his religion of art, my young successor: rejecting life! *Not* living is what he makes his beautiful fiction *out* of!" (105). In addition to Lonoff's dry dignity in the face of his wife's withering attack, *The Ghost Writer* projects a powerful vision of human suffering; and this power comes from the third section ("Femme Fatale" 74–93), which is a postmodern transgressive "fiction . . . [Nathan] had evolved about" Bellette and Lonoff while he lay in Lonoff's study (94). Standing on Lonoff's daybed with his ear to the ceiling, Nathan hears Amy pleading with Lonoff to take her away to Florence; and this scene, plus a physical resemblance, stirs him for the rest of the night to imagine that Amy Bellette is really Anne Frank—icon whom Nathan has sacrilegiously appropriated as a nocturnal object of his transgressive imagination. Nathan conceives of Amy's experience with a different kind of representation from that with which he renders his own. Amy's experience, as he imagines it, is the history of an individual life tied to, saturated in, a collectively suffered human event. For this reason, Amy represents a new muse, a prophetic visionary experiment to probe historical reality, which could point Roth in a new direction. She seems to portend the possibility of a writer who will replace individualism, self-referentiality, instinct, and transgression, not with Lonoff's excessive restraint and detachment, but on a more universal order, with an experience of history, necessity, pain, and moral anguish. Ironically, he accomplishes this vision by an uninhibited invention that violates the memory of a Jewish saint.

Using the kookiness and meretriciousness of New York City as its obtrusive background, *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), the second novel of the trilogy, concerns Zuckerman's disappointing experience of celebrity after the publication of *Carnovsky*. Much of the book is set on the streets, outside bar and grills on noisy corners, where Zuckerman is buttonholed by strangers. It describes a world of opinionated city dwellers with low appetites, a world of menace and disillusion. The implied moral seems to be that one reaps what one sows. After *Carnovsky*, Zuckerman gets a Times Square world rather than the high, hushed admiration of literary critics—an agent telling him to take his place at the trough with the rich and powerful, a blackmailer threatening to kidnap his mother, and a one-night stand with a movie star who has moved on to Fidel Castro by the next afternoon, while Zuckerman is busy ordering $500 suits for his new life with her. And then there is Alvin Pepler—ubiquitous, loquacious, demanding, egomaniacal, a former 1950s television quiz show star with a photographic memory and a Newark Jewish back-

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ground, obsessed with and fixated on Zuckerman, his successful double. Pepler is an unfocused, high-I.Q. man-child, misunderstood by society. And Zuckerman, having achieved notoriety rather than literary recognition, feels not that differently about himself despite his commercial success: He too is disillusioned and has been denied recognition. Yet if, on the one hand, Pepler is Zuckerman's doppelgänger, on the other hand, Pepler is an expression of Roth's wish *not* to have succeeded—not to have achieved wealth and popularity through transgressions; and to have regressed instead to what he would be if he'd had less good fortune.

Guilt over commercial success achieved through artistic transgression makes its first explicit appearance as a theme in *Zuckerman Bound*. We can understand this theme as a by-product of the autobiographical method and the inescapable autobiographical allusions in Zuckerman-Roth's work: the method, as Roth describes it in *The Facts*, of "coaxing into existence a being whose experience was comparable to my own and yet registered a more powerful valence, a life more highly charged and energized, more entertaining than my own" (6). This method includes the practice of feeding savagely off the comic faults and amusing foibles of Jewish mothers, fathers, relatives, siblings, and girlfriends who bear a resemblance to his own, or at least make us wonder about resemblances and assume the consequence of wounded feelings. "That writing is an act of imagination seems to perplex and infuriate everyone," Roth writes in *The Anatomy Lesson* (271), alluding to the fact that all but Roth's most dispassionate readers and critics take a good deal of what he writes as literally true. For his own part, Roth distinguishes between artistic and moral responsibility; and regarding his artistic work, he disavows moral responsibility. To make matters worse, Roth equates artistic responsibility with what would generally be judged moral irresponsibility and disruptiveness.

The final word of Zuckerman's father, dying on his hospital bed and with his family around him, is thought to be "Bastard." To whom was he referring (224)? Nathan's brother Henry, tired of Zuckerman's emotional remoteness, leaves no room for uncertainty:

> He did say 'Bastard,' Nathan. He called you a 'bastard.' . . . You *are* a bastard. A heartless conscienceless bastard. . . . To you everything is disposable! Everything is *ex*posable! Jewish morality, Jewish endurance, Jewish wisdom, Jewish families. . . . And the worst is how we protect you from knowing what you really are! And what you've done! You killed him, Nathan. Nobody will tell you—they're too frightened of you to say it. They think you're too famous to criticize. . . . But you killed him. . . . With that book. *Of course* he said 'Bastard.'" (238–39)

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This dramatically realized counterargument to Roth's imaginative license transforms the problem of artistic guilt from a spasm of self-recrimination to a fully weighed reality with psychological, artistic, and moral dimensions. It lays bare the diabolical bargain that Roth has made in order to realize his talent for satire and his rage for psychological realism.

In *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), the third novel of the trilogy, the public consequences of Zuckerman's transgressive book have already played out. It is several years later, but he has not moved on. He is afflicted with severe and nearly crippling neck, shoulder, and arm pain. He spends much of his time on a mat on his back. He's seen every kind of doctor and tried every kind of medicine and treatment. Vodka, marijuana, and Percodan are his self-medications of choice, especially the "opening wallop" and talking jag produced by Percodan (364). Naturally he spends lots of time thinking about the possible psychosomatic causes of his problem. At the top of his list of causes is the belief that his suffering is self-punishment for the guilt he feels from his literary cruelty to his parents and his success at the expense of his tribe (265, 365). Another possibility is that the pain is an expression of his wish to cling to the past, because he has used up his major subject, and he would rather be disabled than face a scary future without parents, childhood, and tribe to write about (268). Another suggests that he is mired in a psychic struggle with male elders exemplified by Milton Appel, the critic who assailed him about *Carnovsky* (308–44). Or was he "unconsciously suppressing his talent for fear of what it'd do next?" (266) Or was his incapacitation an effort to rescue him from the "wrong calling" (267)?

The most striking characteristic of *The Anatomy Lesson* is the dramatization of the wall of physical and psychic pain that separates him from the deep meanings of his symptom—meanings that he believes could free him. In the age of Freud, psychological interpretations of a somatic symptom—most obviously "the hysterical conversion symptom" (260)—abound among the educated; but a recalcitrant wall between ego and id is what ultimately characterizes Zuckerman's experience. Like the "'dead, blind wall,'" which, in Captain Ahab's words, "'butts all inquiring heads'" (*Moby-Dick* 521), the painful bodily areas Zuckerman struggles to understand possess materiality that fails to yield meaning. "The interrogation had no useful purpose, yet the sole motif of his existence," we are told, was Zuckerman's "hourly search for the missing meaning" (384). At an earlier stage in his career, Roth reviews his fiction in terms of the same image: "The *subject* of restraints and taboos had been dramatized in a series of increasingly pointed fictions that revealed the possible consequences of banging your head against your own

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wall" ("On *The Great American Novel*" 85).[3] In *The Anatomy Lesson*, this "wall" suggests that there is no meaning other than the absurdity of having a mind that can only understand that it does not understand itself.

Zuckerman chooses an act of will, despite the blindness of his understanding (347). He tells himself he should look into going to medical school, to try at 40 to gain "an active connection to life" (367). "Burning" to push things to a climax (368), he returns to Chicago, scene of his undergraduate years. In parts 4 and 5 of *The Anatomy Lesson*, there is a sustained "antic correction" of well over 50 pages. It begins when Zuckerman boards the plane to Chicago pretending to be a pornographic publisher, named after his literary enemy. He may have renounced writing, but his imagination has continued to work. Zuckerman's mounting mania reaches its climax when he collapses in a cemetery in a snow storm and smashes his face (402–04). In the hospital of Dr. Bobby Freytag, his college pal, the doctors try to put together Zuckerman's mouth, broken from his fall, cure his addictions, and discover the origins of his neck and shoulder pain (403–11). He sees, smells, and hears the suffering in every room, the suffering of the real world. One day during his convalescence, he succumbs to a strange impulse: Into a bin

> he plunged his arms down through the tangle of sheets and bed wear and towels. He never expected so much to be so damp. The strength rushed from his groin, his mouth filed with bile—it was as if he were up to his elbows in blood. (418–19)

He says to himself in the same antic spirit that has animated these scenes that he would become a maxillofacial surgeon, like the man who worked on him, or an anesthesiologist, like Bobby Freytag, or he would run a detoxification program and use himself as an example of successful withdrawal. But only the final sentence conveys a true perspective of his destiny, with the double meaning of "corpus." It suggests that he has been trying to escape his unbearable lot as a writer:

> For nearly as long as he remained a patient, Zuckerman roamed the busy corridors of the university hospital, patrolling and planning on his own by day, then out on the quiet floor with the interns at night, as though he still believed that he could unchain himself from a future as a man apart and escape from the corpus that was his. (419–20)

He cannot escape his destiny as a transgressive and antisocial writer, a man apart; and he cannot escape the "corpus" of his work any more than he can escape the pain of his body. Despite the abyss, he must go on.

Hence *The Anatomy Lesson* takes us to a fork in the road for the writer of transgressive semiautobiographical fiction. In "The Prague Orgy," the epi-

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logue of *Zuckerman Bound*, Zuckerman tries, without much success, to move beyond the impasse into historical circumstances in Eastern Europe. At first he imagines himself tuning into all sort of old European realities and to "shedding *my* story" and "the narrative encasing me" (471). But ultimately he concludes,

> No, one's story isn't a skin to be shed—it's inescapable, one's body and blood. You go on pumping it out till you die, the story veined with the themes of your life, the ever-recurring story that's at once your invention and the invention of you. (471)

He realizes he cannot fashion an escape route into either tragic universal humanism or pure self-invention.

Roth's intergenerational thesis about the origin of his transgressive art remains important: "A first-generation American father possessed by the Jewish demons, a second-generation American son possessed by their exorcism: that was his whole story" (269). But once these "demons" are glossed as his father's "rigid principles and narrow understanding," and to this is added the fact that his father was "bursting with taboos," it is clear we are confronting a first-generation father fairly similar to other first-generation immigrant fathers—driven by unexamined moral codes and compulsions, by the stubborn discipline of hard work, and by the will to advance their families at whatever cost to themselves. To better distinguish the origins of Roth's art, we need to adopt a more culturally specific and dynamic perspective on the genesis of Roth's transgressive art and theme, one based on the spatial image of transgression as the crossing of a line. As I have shown, most of Roth's narratives since *Portnoy* can be understood in terms of crossing a psychosocial line from a subculture to the mainstream. If we begin by conceiving Roth's position in society spatially, we will visualize him as culturally marginalized and assume—an admittedly assimilationist assumption—that he wants admission to and validation from the mainstream. And to the extent that he feels barriers or deficiencies in himself, we will also need to assume he wants to overcome these obstacles. Moreover, we will be aided by keeping in mind that such impediments, especially when they are internalized, don't readily disappear. Strategies are needed to confront—if not overcome—them, such as defying expectations, holding unpopular opinions, or behaving unconventionally. For excitable and highly capable young men like Alex Portnoy, Peter Tarnopol, and David Kepesh, young men eager to test themselves against cultural resistance, such strategies of counterresistance are highly attractive. In fact, these men feel that only through trans-

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gressive behavior can cultural resistance be energetically challenged and their identities fully defined.

A subtext of crossing a psychosocial line is ever present in *Portnoy's Complaint.* Alex describes a strategy, for example, of penetrating WASP culture by taking their daughters as girlfriends and thereby gaining a window on the WASP worldview and family life. Sexual penetration becomes cultural penetration; and cultural penetration can be informative and, at the same time, retributive: "I don't seem to stick" it "up these girls, as much as I stick it up their backgrounds—as though . . . I will . . . *conquer* America" (235). Crossing a line is also, obviously, involved in the assertion of a freewheeling sex life; and the opportunity for this transgressive excitement exists in literature as well as in life. In literature, moreover, Jewish-American writers like Roth and Mailer seem particularly keyed to defiance. The aforementioned taboos and discipline of their fathers are perhaps part of the reason, since the second-generation son seems to feel that his manhood depends on violating the taboos that his father—too busy working, too puritan, or too hemmed in and timid—never dared to defy.

In *My Life as a Man* and *The Professor of Desire,* the plots again follow the master pattern of transgression and punishment, the crossing of a line. In both novels, there is a Gentile girl whose family, cultural background, and personal development are deficient; no self-respecting, intelligent Jew, Roth suggests, would want to marry her. After the disastrous marital consequences for his protagonists for doing just that, there is the continued pattern in the appearance of a second upper-class WASP woman whose background is exemplary in terms of mainstream competence and perspective. This second woman enables Roth's "heroes" to avoid having to turn to Jewish girls for nurture and stability. Clearly, Tarnopol and Kepesh (like Portnoy already and Zuckerman yet to unfold) prefer women who come from the other side of the tracks ethnically, culturally, and economically.

If the foregoing novels involve transgressions that move outward, in *Zuckerman Bound* truth telling requires inward line crossing: hostility toward the family and betrayal of the Jewish community by washing dirty family laundry in public and by confessing subcultural disgruntlement. Whereas upper-class WASP men—at least from the perspective of lower-middle-class Jewish men—seem to grow up in harmony with their manhood and with a sense of cultural place, the Rothian hero feels tied to a rock of guilt and complaint. The fury in Roth over inadequate fathering (which prompts a monologue like the one about Mr. Portnoy's problem with constipation, *Portnoy* 4–5) becomes, in *Zuckerman Bound,* the cause of his later spasms and oscillations between guilt and rebellion. The preparation never feels quite right that the second-generation Jewish-American male receives to take his

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place in mainstream America. His inner rhythms and chemistry feel different. And the protest available to the young Rothian writer protagonist, who continues to feel different—unconfident about his cultural reception, yet unwilling to change—is to aim his anger at the source of his difference and possible deficiency, at his parents and his subculture. The Rothian protagonist both welcomes and fears the developing schism or mismatch between his viewpoint and the mainstream culture; and he cannot decide if this schism, this new battle line, is his blessing or his curse. But whichever it may be, he blames his family for putting him in this confusing situation. He cannot stop raging. Put another way, his attack on his family is a displaced attack on the culture that frightens him with its persistent rejection of his persistent assertions of difference.

What, then, is the positional relation of the writer Philip Roth to the mainstream culture? Does he build his house of fiction from outside the mainstream, or does it psychologically and culturally arise by straddling a line between his outsider's sphere and the mainstream? Clearly it is not built from within; full-scale assimilation is akin to denial of the most real parts of him. Roth's fiction is built at the margins of the mainstream and from outside it. This outsider status, moreover, is not a direct product of his Jewishness, since in relation to his Jewishness he also stands largely outside, looking in. In the end, we might think of Roth as a "Jewish outsider." He sustains a critique on both mainstream and Jewish life; and he pursues a counterresistant authenticity at odds with the ideals of both mainstream and Jewish life. When Zuckerman describes himself as "a Jew set free even from Jews—yet only by steadily maintaining self-consciousness as a Jew" (*Zuckerman Bound* 289)—we see into a kind of alienation that is enlivened and exacerbated by what binds it. Roth's art, on the one hand, lies outside mainstream codes and imperatives—angry and embattled, independent and proud; and on the other hand, it lies inside—bound, guilty, and moved to transgress.

In Roth's fiction since *Zuckerman Bound* (1985), transgression remains a central theme. Transcultural and historical perspectives, however, have shaped it, and postmodern conceptions of the self have become dominant.[4] In *The Counterlife* (1986), the kinds of transgression just described are revisited in a multidrama about Nathan and Henry Zuckerman at middle age. And the variety of narrative versions of the fates of the same brothers and their women raises the question of whether the transgressive impulse is an essential aspect of human individuality or whether when treated with more irony and distance—a cool omniscience framing heated themes—the transgres-

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sive self may be described as simply performative, a cultural construct animated by literary ingenuity (319–20). *Deception* (1990) presents a writer's notebook of "postcoital intimacy" (187)—dialogues with women with whom the writer imagines himself conducting affairs without a taint of shame. However, when his wife finds his notebooks, the licit becomes illicit. What is innocent by the writer's standards is guilty by hers. She refuses to accept that his fantasies are not "real," and he refuses to stop living in invention (191).

In *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993), the transgression theme shifts into explicitly Jewish issues of identity and identity politics. These are dramatized by means of a counterpoint of opinion and, in particular, by the use of a doppelgänger who holds political views antithetical to the narrator's. Another man in Israel named Philip Roth is advocating "diasporism," the principle that Israelis should defect and return to the European diaspora to avoid a new Holocaust. The irony is that the protagonist-narrator Roth seems to possess latent affinities with the anti-Zionist aspects of this position. Eventually, out of guilt, and to offset his assimilationist sympathies, Roth agrees to undertake a mission for Israeli Intelligence. One might call *Operation Shylock* a fiction about the friction of doubles. So many points of view about political and ethnic identity are dramatized through secondary characters that the reader is lead to the conclusion that there isn't an essential Jewish identity (Shostak 4). Arguing otherwise, Smilesburger, the Israeli agent, says to Roth,

> Why are you so determined to deny the Jewish patriotism, you in whom I realize, from your writings, the Jew is lodged like nothing else except, perhaps, the male libido. . . . Being Jewish as you are is your most secret vice. (388)

To Smilesburger Jewishness is intrinsic—intrinsic as Roth's libido!—but throughout the book we are shown otherwise; identity is multiple and changing, a product of circumstance, mood, imaginative impersonation, and contrivance.

Sabbath's Theater (1995) presents the other side of Roth's literary imagination where the remorselessly real, not the imaginative, is dominant. This novel's more denotative approach and essentialist view of the protagonist provides multiple views of his transgressive nature only in terms of the different cultural eras from which his story emerges (Rush 2, 5–10). And while these cultural eras may vary in how his behavior is judged, his penchant for raunchiness and disruption is fairly constant. Whoring as a merchant seaman on the "Romance Run" in the late 1940s (99), arrested for fondling a female student during a finger puppet performance during the Eisenhower

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era (192), heading the Indecent Theater in Manhattan in the early 60s (79), being ejected from a college position in late 80s for taping telephone sex with a coed, and championing his Croatian mistress's promiscuity to satisfy his voyeurism, Mickey Sabbath persuades us that a deep and angry sexual anarchism animates his relation to mainstream society. Yet Sabbath's characterization is not without biographical and philosophical elements. A powerful undertow of emotional pain and a desperado philosophy with roots in the existential Absurd have built up in his life from the death of his brother in World War II, from the disappearance of his first wife Nikki, and from his failed life as a puppeteer and theater director. These defeats not only provide sufficient basis to understand Sabbath's nihilism, social anger, and carnal obsession, but they also make him into an American relation to Albert Camus's Meursault. Words are useless to Sabbath because life has no pattern (91): "Trying to talk sensibly and reasonably about his life seemed even more false to him than the tears—every word, every *syllable*, another moth nibbling a hole in the truth" (144). The truth for Sabbath was that life is chaos: "'What was the point of trying to find reason or meaning in any of these things?' Sabbath asks. By the time I was twenty-five I already knew there wasn't any'" (145).

In a dim, emblematic way, the self-conscious postmodern mode is not entirely absent from Roth's treatment of transgression in *Sabbath's Theater*. In his roles as transgressive puppeteer, theater director, teacher, and lover, Sabbath's wayward impulse to manipulate and debase women provides a metaphorical representation of Philip Roth's relation to his postmodern novels. Sabbath manipulates women and realizes self-centered pleasure in the same manner Roth creates and manipulates characters and events in reflexive novels such as *Portnoy's Complaint* and *Operation Shylock*. The creator-creation relationship in these works, especially their regressive and narcissistic aspects, is hinted at symbolically in his relations with women in *Sabbath's Theater*.

The confluence of personal and artistic themes about being a Jewish American has resulted in a perpetually renewing literary originality in Roth's fiction. Each of Roth's novels is a lens through which he examines his life as an American writer who cannot ignore that he is a Jew. And each dramatizes its material in a way that achieves a highly personal yet universal pathos about man as a rebel and outcast who must suffer for his cultural resistance and transgressive authenticity. In the end, Roth's depiction of second-generation Jewish-American protagonists might arguably be seen as a representation of, or a trope for, a more generalized late twentieth-century

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alienation. Yet despite this view, cultural positionality in Roth's work remains important, since his narratives derive their universal power from their ethnic and sociocultural specificity. Acknowledging this universality in Roth's novels is not, then, a basis for claiming that Roth is not quintessentially a hyphenate, a Jewish-American writer. The tensions between subcultural and mainstream experience are at the core of each of his novels and at the heart of his preoccupation with transgression. If anything, this essay suggests the importance of further examination of the tensions between "minority" and "mainstream" status in second- and third-generation postimmigrant American writers.

NOTES

[1] It may seem a questionable practice to quote from one fiction about the wife of Nathan Zuckerman in order to understand the wife of Peter Tarnopol in another fiction. Yet *My Life as a Man* represents the beginning of Philip Roth's postmodernist interest in distinguishing in his fiction between segments intended to represent real life or serve as allusions to real life and other segments presented as fictional renderings of life. Hence we are asked to perceive "Salad Days" and "Courting Disasters" as "useful fictions" (Roth's term for part 1 of *My Life as a Man*) produced by writer Peter Tarnopol as he struggles to come to terms with his disastrous marriage to Maureen Johnson in the book's second and major part, "My True Story." "My True Story" encircles the two shorter fictions, since it represents the baseline reality of the world in which writer Tarnopol uses writer Zuckerman as his fictional alter ego. (See p. 226, where Tarnopol writes to a dead Maureen about his character Lydia, saying, "Isn't Lydia pretty much how you saw yourself?") Indeed, once we read on in Roth's oeuvre to *The Professor of Desire* (1977), we begin to understand that in *My Life as a Man* we have been introduced explicitly for the first time to the metanarrative of writer Philip Roth, which extends through five novels and two autobiographies to *The Counterlife* (1986), and even extends further to *Deception* (1990) and *Operation Shylock* (1993), where "Philip Roth" becomes a character of the writer Philip Roth.

[2] In this ongoing immense metanarrative, the characters may change, their names, biographical details, and settings may vary, but they are all invariably a part of the same great obsessive story that their author seems (like Joyce and Proust before him) to have accepted as his only true material and only real opportunity for greatness. This is the story of Jewish upbringing, early literary successes, military service, graduate school, award-winning literary recognition, disastrous marriage to a Gentile, breakdown, psychoanalysis, greater literary success, then the conundrum of celebrity/notoriety, wealth, guilt, self-punishment, and breakdown again—and again. Philip Roth's actual life becomes the *ding an sich* out of which emerges the imaginative variations on the "real." If we needed any corroboration that his novels parallel his life, *The Facts: A Novelist's Autobiography* (1988) provides that, even as the book introduces the relativistic nature of "the facts" by ending with a letter to Philip Roth from fictional double Nathan Zuckerman who calls into question the emotional coloration given to

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them. Roth's work embodies the view that experience and imagination interpenetrate, that they are ultimately inseparable in life as well as in literature, and that we grasp "reality" more fully when we keep this pervading bipolar unity in mind.

[3] As the preceding paragraph on the same page illustrates, the salience and power of the image of the wall for Roth cannot be overstated as his means of describing a barrier preventing self-realization:

> I can even think of these characters—Gabe Wallach, Alexander Portnoy, and David Kepesh—as three stages of a single explosive projectile that is fired into the barrier that forms one boundary of the individual's identity and experience: that barrier of personal inhibition, ethical conviction and plain, old monumental fear beyond which lies the moral and psychological unknown. Gabe Wallach crashes up against the wall and collapses; Portnoy proceeds on through the fractured mortar, only to become lodged there, half in, half out. It remains for Kepesh to pass right on through the bloodied hole, and out the other end, into no-man's-land. (85)

[4] I would like to acknowledge the reading of a draft of this essay by Professor Debra Shostak of the College of Wooster in Ohio. Her response was especially valuable concerning the ambiguity of Roth's work as ethnic or universal and also concerning the postmodern dimensions of Roth's recent fiction.

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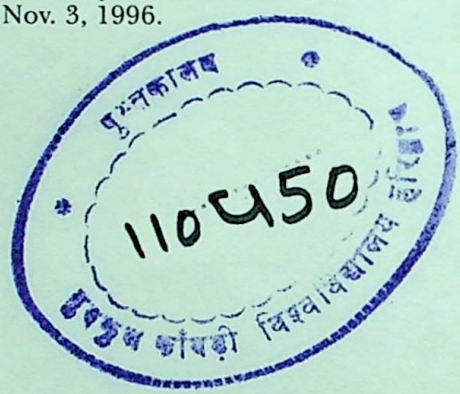
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